

PlayStation plus

TEKKEN 3
THE **LEGEND** CONTINUES

LEGACY OF KAIN
THE **VAMPIRE**
STRIKES BACK

~~THE~~ **EVIL**
GT CAST A
DEADLY SPELL

INTERNATIONAL
SUPERSTAR SOCCER PRO
KONAMI'S LEAGUE LEADER



EVERY NEW
PLAYSTATION
GAME **REVIEWED**
AND RATED

BEDROOM DIY
YAROZE! WHAT YOU CAN DO WITH
SONY'S LITTLE BLACK BOX

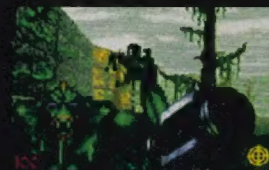
forget
everything your
mother said
about running
with sharp
objects



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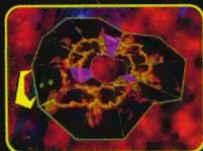
**Official
Playstation 9/10**

"Thrilling!"

"I couldn't help but be dazzled. The new effects are mind blowing."

"Tempest X is an exceptional blaster. It's like a '96 dance remix of an old rave hardcore classic! I want it!"

C&VG 5/5



"This is a classic game that shows no sign of age, due in no small part to a fine conversion."

A renovated Tempest returns to the Hall of Fame"

"Players will be blown away by the visual elegance of Tempest"

**Mean Machines
Sega 88%
(Tempest 2000)**

"Stare fixedly at the screen, hold down the fire button and relive the old days... with added bosh and weird spinning colours!"

**Play
86%**



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Bedroom DIY

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Inside the new Yaroze

In the Yaroze, the public have a machine which allows them to get to grips with the PlayStation's development system with the eventual aim of creating games which, by rights, could be published. The system is compatible with most PCs, and the Sony starter kit includes manuals, software, and all the relevant cables. Similarly, because the machine is only available directly from Sony, registered users can benefit from the information available via the Internet site.

Sony's machine could well be the way ahead for games design, and could also make getting a foothold with major software houses much easier. *PlayStation Plus* lifts the lid on the new machine...



Hexen

58



GT follow *Doom* with a game containing sprawling levels, more monsters, and a hint of black magic. The Id classic is a tough act to follow, but GT's hopes for the Probe conversion of the PC classic are high. *PlayStation Plus* is the first magazine to review *Hexen*, the adventure begins on page 58.

Hot Stuff

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Peripherals

In a new irregular feature, *PlayStation Plus* bench tests the latest add-ons and accessories for the Sony machine. This month, as Doncaster-based Fire International release a host of peripherals under their Blaze label, we give their cables, controllers and memory cards a thorough testing. For the most part, the Blaze products are considerably cheaper than the official Sony counterparts, but are you getting a bargain or is it false economy.



Regulars:

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TEKKEN 3 ENTERS THE ARCADES • INTERPLAY REVEAL CLAY FIGHTER EXTREME • DESCENT 2 EMERGES • SEQUELS TO ACTUA AND OLYMPIC SOCCER REVEALED...

THE OLD ADAGE 'NOT JUST A PRETTY FACE' IS PARTICULARLY APPLICABLE TO THE NEW SONY YAROE. QUITE SIMPLY THE CLASSICEST-LOOKING CONSOLE AROUND, THE YAROE IS ALSO THE BRIGHTEST HOPE THAT SONY COULD HAVE AGAINST THE IMMINENT NINTENDO ONSLAUGHT. BY ALLOWING HOME PROGRAMMERS TO TRY THEIR HAND AT CREATING GAMES. FROM THIS LITTLE ACORN, A NEW WAVE OF TALENT WILL EMERGE, ALLOWING SOFTWARE HOUSES TO CAST THEIR NETS FURTHER, AND CREATING A LARGE SOFTWARE BASE FOR THE SONY MACHINE. AND THAT'S NO BAD THING, IS IT?

STEVE MERRETT, EDITOR

Tekken 3

Namco's Iron Fist Strikes Back

AT THE END OF JANUARY, Namco's Wonderpark amusement arcade in London took delivery of a 60% complete board of the long-awaited Tekken 3. The technical side of the coin-op is considerably more advanced than before, with Namco using their new System 12 hardware which has 50% more CPU power than the old System 11 board, and also features 50% more powerful rendering capabilities, allowing the graphic artists to extend their range even further, adding considerably more surface detail to the characters and refine the animation to previously impossible standards.

Tekken 3 takes place twenty years after the events of the second game, with a third 'Iron Fist' tournament about to take place, and with nine characters entering for individual reasons — although the number of combatants may be increased in the final board. Tekken 3 retains the same side-on view of its illustrious predecessors, but for the first time in one of their beat 'em ups, Namco have added a side-ways movement, wherein the character moves 'into' the screen following a tap up on the joystick, thus allowing the player to move their character out of the immediate path of kicks and throws thanks to this second plane, and it also offers more freedom for offensive and defensive manoeuvres.

The instinctive control systems are one of the reasons the Namco games have been so successful, but they have now added more control over



THE CHARACTERS:

JIN KAZAMA



PAUL PHOENIX



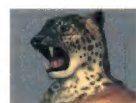
FOREST LAW



LEI WULONG



KING



NINA WILLIAMS



YOSHIMITSU



the character's posture while they are mid jump, including the ability to assume a defensive position to avoid leg sweeps as they land. The number of moves available to each character have been extend-



ed with rendered graphics, and this coupled with the benefits of the System 12 board even allows for minue detail like the clenching of fists and the subtle movement of the fighters' clothing.

60% complete arcade version unveiled..

ed, too, with the moves motion-captured from top ranking fighters. From the basic motion-capture data, Namco have completely remodelled each of the fighters, using a system called 'envelope management.' This technique means that the models are moved so that each limb is manipulated separately losing some of the rigidity that is always associat-



Out Now
On the shelves this month...

SPACE JAM

Acclaim reuse their NBA Jam engine, with Bugs Bunny & Co. and Michael Jordan on the court trying to save the Warner planet. Awarded 65% in issue 17



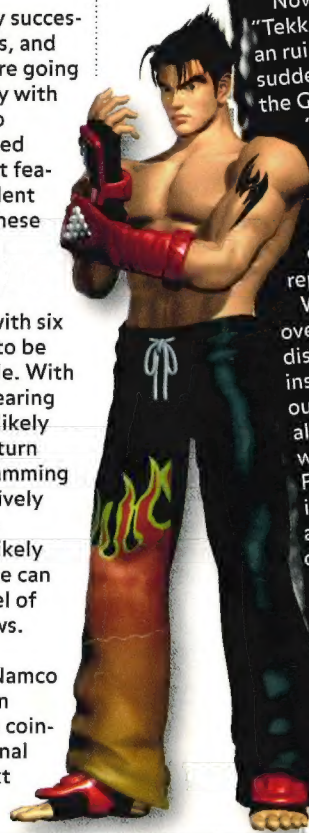
SPOT GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

Spot's second outing is good at times, but the occasional glimmers of brilliance are marred by control gripes and a bizarre feeling of deja-vu. Awarded 77% this issue



In addition to the characters listed, the 60% complete game also features two new heroes, both of whom have access to as many moves as established favourites such as Paul Phoenix and Yoshimitsu. Hwoarang is similar in style to Baek Doo San from the first game, while Xiaoyu is a completely original female character with a similarly unseen fighting style. **Tekken 3** is a stunning looking game, and in addition to the new characters and level of detail, for the first time in one of their games, Namco have redesigned the backdrops so they are fully 3D. Whereas previous **Tekken** games offered no real sense of depth and the backdrops were flat area, for the third tournament a parallax effect adds the previously missing feeling of depth.

Tekken 3 is a worthy successor to its predecessors, and fans of the first two are going to be more than happy with the new game. Namco have once again stashed away a horde of secret features for the more ardent players to spot, and these are determined by an internal clock which responds to certain sequences of play – with six characters rumoured to be hidden within the code. With the coin-op version nearing completion, it seems likely that Namco will then turn their attentions to cramming the code into the relatively humble PlayStation – although it seems unlikely that the home machine can come close to the level of detail System 12 allows. Even so, expect an announcement from Namco regarding a conversion shortly, until then the coin-op should go on national release within the next six weeks.



Tekken 3: The Full Story

As regular fans of Namco's beat 'em ups will know, the developers like to create detailed scenarios and backgrounds to each new beat 'em up, thus fleshing out the characters and giving them motives for their inclusion in the new games. What follows is Namco's complete scenario for **Tekken 3** as translated from the Japanese texts:

After "The King of the Iron Fist Tournament 2" has drawn to a close Jun Kazama tries to approach Kazuya, as she senses that Kazuya's power comes from the devil. However, when Jun meets with Kazuya she feels herself being sucked into his mysterious force. A few days later, Heihachi, the sponsor of the tournament, visits Kazuya and after a violent fight kills his son. Not knowing of the devil, Heihachi buries Kazuya in the crater of a volcano. Almost at the same time, the devil appears before Jun Kazama and tries to seize her and Kazuya's newly born child, "Jin". However, she beats the devil and brings up Kazuya's son in the mountains of Yakushima far from mankind.

Having gained the Mishima financial empire in his hands, Heihachi becomes the head of the Mishima family once again. He wants to be trusted by world leaders so that he can try and gain greater power for himself. In order to do so Heihachi dispatches "Tekken Force", Mishima's private corps, to settle world disputes and cultivate waste land to feed the starving 3rd world countries. For a short time at least world peace seems to have been restored.

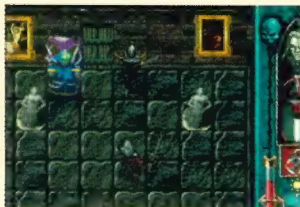
Now, 15 years have passed and winter has come for 15 year old Jin Kazama. "Tekken Force", directed by Heihachi to excavate the site of some American Indian ruins, discovers a mysterious creature. Heihachi orders them to recover it but suddenly all contact is lost with "Tekken Force". Their last message was "...Is it the God of Fighting?!" Heihachi immediately goes to the ruins in search of "Tekken Force" but only to find a large number of corpses. Mishima's corps have been completely destroyed. At first he feels deep sorrow, but then a new ambition begins to stir. "If I could take this creature, with such great power, under my control, then my dream to conquer the world might yet come true." Heihachi begins to take action to realise his ambitions, to first gain the "God of Fighting" and then the world. Once more history starts to repeat itself...

Within a short period of time, numerous strange occurrences break out all over the world. Strong spirited people - the world's hand-to-hand fighters are disappearing. At this time, Jun, who had been living peacefully with Jin, instinctively knew that danger was approaching. "A tremendous power seeks our lives." In preparation for the day that it would come, Jun explained to Jin all about his past. She also told him that if anything should happen to her he was to go to Heihachi Mishima. Then one stormy night, it came. The "God of Fighting" appeared in the mountains where 15-year-old Jin and Jun were living, and raised everything to the ground. Ignoring his mother's cry of "Run away!", Jin fought against the "God of Fighting". But in a moment, Jin lost consciousness.

When he awoke, neither his mother nor the woods where they had been living remained. Everything had been burned down. Since the "God of Fighting" had killed his mother Jin went to Heihachi and asked him to teach him the fighting arts so that he could defeat the "God of Fighting". On hearing Jin's story Heihachi was now sure now that the "God of Fighting" was seeking the strong spirited. He made up his mind to lure the "God of Fighting" by holding "The King of the Ironfist Tournament 3" where those with strong spirits would be fighting each other. Four years later, it is spring for 19 year old Jin Kazama. "The King of the Ironfist Tournament 3" will start soon.

LEGACY OF KAIN

BMG's *Legacy of Kain* is set to dominate the RPG market. Unlike the majority of new releases it has enough depth to warrant months of play. Awarded 92% this issue



VIRTUAL POOL

Interplay offer the first Sony-based pool game, and despite the dreadful soft rock which plays throughout, this is a diverting game. Awarded 85% this issue



DARK FORCES

Not the conversion that was hoped for, but the mixture of *Doom* and *Star Wars* works well, with complex missions making it quite respectable. Awarded 84% in issue 17



NBA IN THE ZONE 2

Generally tighter than the first, with finely-tuned control benefiting the game, and an extra level of polish missing from the first game. Awarded 90% in issue 17





Descent 2

A YEAR AFTER THE FIRST GAME'S

release, *Descent 2* has now been confirmed as a March release for the PlayStation. As with the first game, *Descent 2* is set within a fresh set of sprawling caverns, but has added intelligent robots to the player's inventory. This is in answer to complaints regarding the less than helpful maps of the first game, and the 'Guide Bot' is on hand to lead the player to power-ups and even towards the exit when the mission is over — but far from making the game too easy, the 'Bot moves at incredible speed, making things just that bit harder for the player. All new weapons have also been implemented, and the updated screen is smoother than before, thus meaning that *Descent 2* should redress any gripes with its predecessor.

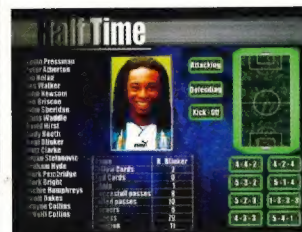
Actua Soccer: Club Edition

ACTUA SOCCER: CLUB EDITION CONTAINS PRO-FILES ON THE PLAYERS AND TEAMS IT FEATURES.

GREMLIN ARE READY TO RETURN to the football fold, as they update their *Actua Soccer* engine for the new year. *Actua Soccer: Club Edition* is a tweaked version of the existing code, with all the 1996 teams listed and available for the player's delectation. This also opens up a number of



league and tournament possibilities, with the player opting to take the Premier side of their choice through to victory. And West Ham. Gremlin are also promising to rectify some of the first game's weak points, and the finished version is set to debut sometime in April.



Eutechnics

EUTECHNICS IS THE NEW NAME for the old Merit Studios development team following an exclusive licensing deal with Ocean. Merit were formed from a selection of ex-Codemasters staff, and shots of their proposed titles were shown in past issues of *PlayStation Plus*. The new deal



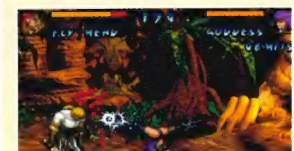
gives Ocean full release rights for all of Eutechnics releases, and the first title to emerge will be the old Merit road racer, *Total Drivin'*. The deal also means that Ocean are to release *Sato City*, the team's dark-looking cyberpunk adventure, and *Motor Mash*, which was previously

known as *Oddball* racers and is perceived as a possible contender for the *Micro Machines V3* crown. Only *Total Drivin'* has been given a definite release date, and should appear sometime in April, but the other two should both be released before July.

AT LONG LAST, TOTAL DRIVIN' HAS FOUND A HOME — WITH MANCHESTER-BASED OCEAN.

Blood Lust

PHILIPS MEDIA'S PLAYSTATION plans now include *Blood Lust*. Developed by System 3, *Blood Lust* is similar in style to the *Killer Instinct* coin-op, with the assortment of human and mutant pugilists slapping it out across a series of unusual backdrops. Combinations of moves play a large part in the game, and Philips and System 3 are both playing up the graphic nature of the game, with loads of blood and gruesome special moves on offer. A May release is being mooted, and following this System 3 are set to turn their attentions to a PlayStation version of their ancient *Last Ninja* series for Philips.



MISSING: PRESUMED LOST

Or not as the case may be. Just what has happened to those games we previewed all that time ago...

ALIENS: COMIC BOOK

First Sighting: Issue 5 (February 1996)

Timed to coincide with the hype surrounding Acclaim's (then) imminent *Alien Trilogy*, Mindscape's take-on of the Alien theme was lifted from the Dark Horse comic books, and opted for an adventure game feel. A space base had been infiltrated by the acid-blooded monsters, and as the commander of a team of marines the player was left to eradicate them. The comic book origins were obvious, with the game's graphics resembling those of the Dark Horse strips perfectly. However, a less than enthusiastic reception for the PC version killed off plans for the PlayStation code, and consequently *Aliens: Comic Book* is another to consign to the 'Scrapped' pile.



3D DECATHLON

First Sighting: Issue 5 (February 1996)

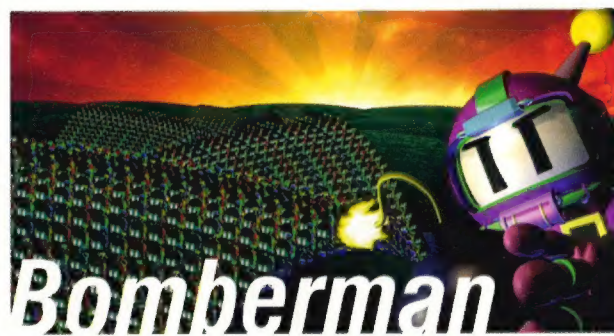
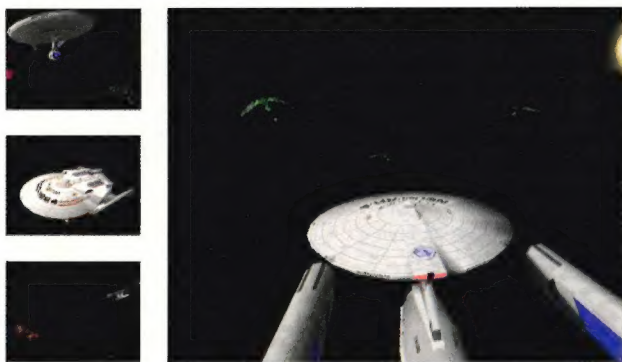
Originally planned for a June release to counter US Gold's *Olympic Games* title and Konami's *Track'n'Field*, the first shots of Virgin's tentatively-titled *3D Decathlon* looked very promising. Using large rendered sprites for the athletes, the full gamut of 100m, long jump, high jump, and throwing events were promised, and Virgin were hoping the game would indeed make it in time for the televised games. Sadly, nothing has been seen since, and *3D Decathlon* is yet to be given a confirmed release date. This, though, could have been a blessing in disguise, as if it had been released, there would have been more athletics games than English gold medals...



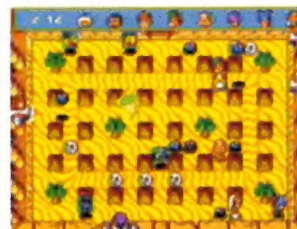
Star Trek: Starfleet Academy

INTERPLAY'S GLUT OF NEW PlayStation titles is set to continue, as their long-term association with Star Trek brings *Starfleet Academy* to the console. *Starfleet Academy* is a flight simulation, offering the player the chance to adopt the role of a would-be Captain Kirk and seize control of the USS Enterprise. 27 missions await the player, with the familiar faces of Kirk, Chekhov and

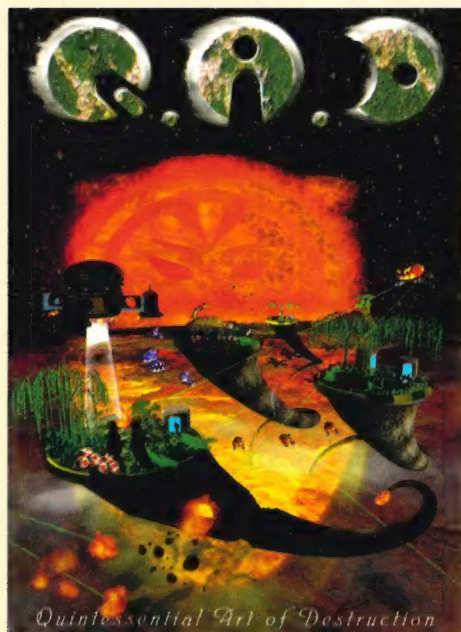
Sulu on hand to offer advice, through FMV sequences especially filmed for the game by William Shatner, Walter Koenig and George Takei respectively. The missions take the chance to exploit every Star Trek scenario possible, with the player battling cloaked Klingon, Birds of Prey, and Romulan cruisers. You'll be able to boldly go in May, when the Academy opens.



ANOTHER VIDEO GAME HERO OF yesteryear is set for his PlayStation debut, as Interplay update *Bomberman* for the Sony machine. Having spanned virtually every handheld and console to date, *Bomberman* is a simple premise which proves to be remarkably playable. As the titular title, the player is dropped into a series of different mazes, and is to use explosives to kill the monsters patrolling the area, and to open up exits. As the game progresses, more bombs and power-ups are added, and this allows for complex chain reactions to be used for maximum destructive effect.



Bomberman really comes to life, though, when a number of players join in, and a free-for-all for power-ups follows as up to four people attempt to blow each other out of the game. *Bomberman* ranks as one of the most consistently good series of games for any console, and Interplay's interpretation of Hudsonsoft's hero should arrive in the summer.



Qad

DEVELOPED BY CRANBERRY Source, *QAD* is a race against time, with the player attempting to rescue hostages from a series of scenarios. An acronym for Quintessential Art of Destruction, *QAD* resembles *Magic Carpet*, but is said to be considerably faster and more arcade-style. The hostages are scattered around the game's 3D levels in rescue pods, and the basic aim of the game is to get to them before the CPU controlled bad guys do — which makes the game similar to Lucasarts' C64 classic, *Rescue on Fractalus*. Released by Philips, *QAD* is to hit the shelves in May.

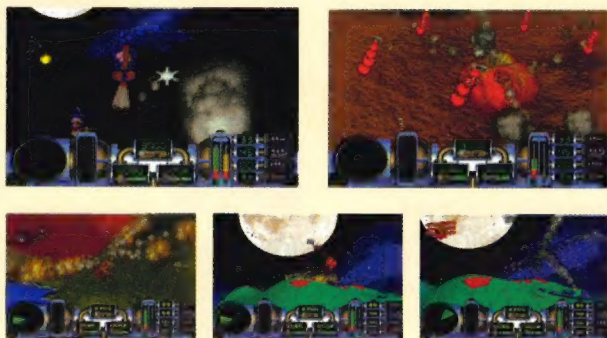


Judgement Force

WITH TOMB RAIDER FIRMLY ensconced in the video game charts, Core are set to use their 3D engine for an update on the old *Final Fight* idea. *Judgement Force* is a scrolling beat 'em up set within a 3D landscape, with the player cast as a rugged member of the eponymous division out to stop a gang boss's aim to control the city. Anyone familiar with Capcom's *Final Fight* or Sega's *Streets of Rage* series

will recognise the game format of walking along, picking fights with several thugs at once, and using whatever comes to hand as weapon, and it works particularly well within the 3D environment. *Judgement Force* is being developed primarily for the Saturn, but as with *Tomb Raider*, and enhanced version of the code is pencilled in for a release, although an actual date has yet to be set.

A BETTER LEVEL OF DETAIL IS ONE OF THE ASPECTS WHICH MAKE PLAYSTATION QAD BETTER THAN THE PC VERSION.



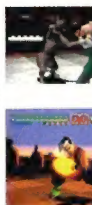
Tobal No 2

NO SOONER HAVE SONY UK released Square's polygon beat 'em up, *Tobal No 1*, than the first pictures of Square's sequel appear. *Tobal No 2* is an update of the first game, with the animation made smoother and the general presentation given a lick of paint. Square have also taken the opportunity to listen to fans' criticisms of the first game, and in addition to their established moves projectile attacks have been added to the game, with Chunji-Wu delivering a fireball attack, and Epon unleashing white flames towards his opponent. The Quest mode has also been renovated, with at least three new boss-



es added (a dragon, a wolf, and a Velociraptor), thus ensuring the sequel is more than just a quick rehash. It seems likely that Sony will handle the game's release in the UK, but this is still to be officially confirmed.

SQUARE HAVE BEEN QUICK OF THE MARK WITH THEIR TOBAL SEQUEL, WITH A HOST OF MOVE ADDITIONS MAKING A MARKED DIFFERENCE.



Soccer 97

THE EIDOS GAME ALSO FEATURES A FULL ROSTER OF PREMIER AND FIRST DIVISION PLAYERS AND TEAMS.

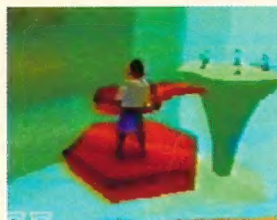
THE EIDOS SEQUEL TO OLYMPIC Soccer has been retitled as *Soccer 97*, and along the way has been granted an official endorsement by the PFA. With *Olympic Soccer* widely regarded as the best soccer game available for the Sony machine, the developers at Silicon Dreams have

improved the player AI, and generally removed the annoying bugs of the first game. More importantly, though, *Soccer 97* features a full complement of Premier and First Division teams, with the PFA license allowing Eidos to use proper player names, with the likes

of Shearer, Wright and Dicks playing for their respective clubs. Also, Alan Green has returned to supply new commentary, so no doubt we'll be hearing that his Mum could save some of Les Ferdinand's weaker efforts when the game is released in March.



Rattlesnake Red



A REGULAR IN THESE PAGES FOR the last couple of months, new has reached us that Acclaim's 3D platformer, *Rattlesnake Red*, has been canned. Developed by Sculptured Software and for a proposed September release, *Red* underwent a handful of name changes during its short existence but looked a worthwhile alternative to *Crash Bandicoot*. The reasons for its canning are not forthcoming, but Acclaim UK are said to be dismayed by the decision.

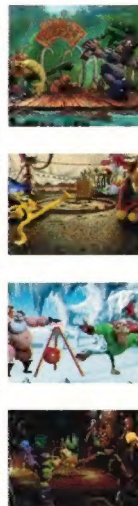


Clay Fighter Extreme

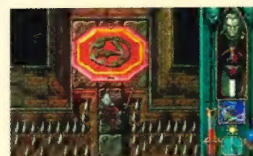
MENTIONED IN PASSING SEVERAL months ago, the first shots of Interplay's *Clay Fighter Extreme* have emerged. The third in the series, *Clay Fighter Extreme* continues the trend started by its predecessors of pitting bizarre clay models against each other in a series of one-on-one fights. There are ten characters on offer, with a mixture of established



Clay Fighters and new heroes, but Interplay have taken advantage of the PlayStation's extra processing power by adding interactive backdrops, of which the fighters can move in and out of. The sprites are some of the largest seen in such a game, and are capable of some incredible morphing moves to fire projectiles and an odd array of kicks and punches — all of which were painstakingly realised through stop-motion animation from real clay models. Interplay are planning a summer release, but a firm date has yet to be set.



RECOMMENDED



LEGACY OF KAIN

Similar in style to Sega's 'Shining' series, with the player cast as a vampire yearning for death. The stunning *Legacy of Kain* is BMG's finest hour and a breath of fresh air for a machine dominated by fighting games.



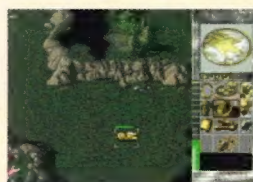
SOUL EDGE

A stunning amalgamation of the two Namco coin-ops. Imagine *Tekken* with weapons, and you're only half way to understanding this incredible fighting game. The best title to emerge from the Japanese team to date.



COOL BOARDERS

Cool Boarders is an incredibly playable race game with a difference. A number of boarders are available, and the challenge is constant thanks to a 'shadow' boarder who repeats your last efforts. Well worth a look.



COMMAND & CONQUER

Westwood's conversion of Virgin's PC hit could have used mouse compatibility to make it a perfect conversion, but even so C&C's mix of war and aesthetics make it initially engaging and then impossible to put down.

Area 51 does not exist.

And if you're smart, you'll stop asking questions.

This is not a game. This is a warning.

you can't get in, but you can take it home.

AREA 51

The Smash Hit Arcade game that shows you what your government won't.

MIDWAY




GT
GT Interactive Software
(Europe) Ltd.
<http://www.gtinteractive.com>

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Bedroom^{DIY}





IT'S A WONDERFUL THOUGHT. Imagine a guaranteed source of software, from a world-wide development community all of whom are dedicated to the Sony PlayStation.

With the assistance of Sony themselves, this huge populace of video game creators swap ideas, routines, and technical know-how in the continual advance of PlayStation game ideas. An impossible dream? Apparently not. On February 28th, Sony Computer Entertainment Europe launch the Yaroze development system in the UK. Six months after the Japanese version has proved a roaring success, Sony have beaten their larger US division and swooped in to be the next division to launch the black beauty. Their support for the machine has already been guaranteed, with SCEE setting up a web site ready for the many questions set to be asked by new users, and with plans to unite Yaroze users around the globe into one huge brain storming group. Such a plan is set to take development 'back to basics' as bedroom programming is brought bang up to date. *PlayStation Plus* was the first magazine to get their hands on Sony's development system, and is proud to unveil every aspect of the new machine you'll need to know, with details on the Internet support, how to set it up, and an interview with Paul Holman: the man overseeing the UK launch.

Sitting behind one of the many meeting room tables in Sony's Noel Street office, Paul Holman looks rather like the Yaroze machine he has taken under his wing, dressed as he is in a black, not too dissimilar to that of the new system. If it is possible for dog owners to resemble their pets, then today Holman is most certainly similar in style to the new, lower profile Sony machine. Just as Sony's marketing team for the PlayStation are supremely confident of their successful machines capabilities, and are proud to revel in its cool image and the avenues that it opens up for promotional opportunities, the Yaroze and its small team, however, are a completely different kettle of fish. If the PlayStation is the wild and reckless young lad of the Sony console family, then the Yaroze is certainly the more studious elder brother, with more possibilities open to it. And the quietly-spoken Holman is perfectly suited to express the possibilities of the development system, but every bit as enthusiastic as the more bullish PlayStation team.

With the February 28th release date growing nearer, Holman is remarkably calm splitting his time between his usual job of assisting third-party developers and ensuring that everything is going smoothly on the Yaroze front. As we talk, the PAL version of the Yaroze is set to go into production that afternoon, and Holman is overseeing the development of everything from the web site and manual translation into every European language, to also keeping tabs on more mundane aspects of the launch, such as delivery details.



Positive

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

After several jobs on the periphery of the industry ('all sorts of things for software companies, within software generically rather than specialising'), Holman is now the Technical Support Manager at Sony Computer Entertainment Europe's London office. Located on the second floor of the building, Holman and his team have been gearing up to the Yaroze launch for just under six months, and Paul Holman came into the UK Yaroze equation fairly early. 'Sony first announced the Yaroze project in May last year in Japan,' he begins, 'and I have known the guy who was actu-

ally pushing the thing since I joined the company, and through him I found out more about it. At first, it was very much a test project to see if it would be successful, but as soon as I heard about it, I thought it would be ideal for European developers.' When the first pictures of the black

was PlayStation creator, Ken Kutaragi's plan for the Sony console's future. Instead, while the Yaroze concept was very much that of Kutaragi's, his vision was fulfilled by an engineering team who filled in the blanks. Holman is incredibly enthusiastic about the machine, and strongly believes that the unit will be a boom to the development community, which, let's face it, can do Sony no harm at all. The more games in the pipeline, the stronger and longer the PlayStation's future: 'what we're doing with Net Yaroze is allowing people to start using the PlayStation outside the company bounds' he offers.



As the **UK Yaroze's** release date creeps ever nearer, one man is overseeing its launch and ensuring the support service can match the demands of the machine. Paul Holman, Sony Computer Entertainment Europe's Technical Support Manager is that man. PlayStation Plus met him as he prepared for the release which could revitalise the development community.

ally pushing the thing since I joined the company, and through him I found out more about it. At first, it was very much a test project to see if it would be successful, but as soon as I heard about it, I thought it would be ideal for European developers.' When the first pictures of the black

The early days of the ZX Spectrum and C64 were famed for 'bedroom' programmers who were famed for creating Manic Miners and countless Galaxians clones in their own homes before making a fortune when it was released, does Holman see a return to these

favoured developers who act as 'Beta Sites' and offer criticisms on the machines, its development language and any points integral to its ease of use. The response has been very good, according to Holman,



with very few complaints and even thought he first machines were loaned with a very dodgy Japanese-English manual.

Before all these focus groups, though, were Sony tempted to employ 'veteran' developers to compile a wish list for the machine? The answer is a resolute no. 'We had that experience anyway' Paul shrugs, 'our day job is

"This makes it more accessible to people who are in the bedroom who want to get into the game industry..."

beast were shown in Japanese trade papers, there was confusion over what exactly it was, although the strongest stories were of the second wave of machines (the much-rumoured PlayStation 2), and that this

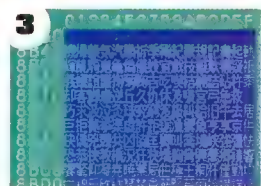
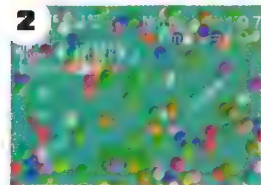
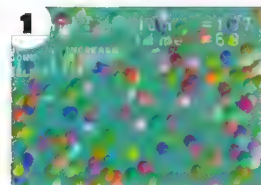
ideals? 'I think there are a number of possibilities for the machine, across a number of different levels,' he says. 'One is by opening up to other people to general public we're not saying "you have to do certain things",

actually working with the developers, so we knew the important aspects to get right in this system.' So, internally, does the machine bear much relevance to the everyday grey

Developments

SOME MADE EARLIER

Sony are ready to set the demo scene rolling with a number of Japanese Yaroze work ready for display. 'Some of the Japanese stuff is really clever,' offers Holman, 'and they've really got to grips with the machine.' So are there any trends with first users? 'To be honest,' Holman says, 'most people's first games are updates of old favourites.' Thus in these days of retro fever, perhaps compilations of old Gremlin or Ocean games could make a return. On the other hand, bearing in mind past game creation software, we could just be in for another wave of porn-related shoot 'em ups and platform games. 'Some of the Japanese stuff we've seen is really weird,' sighs Holman, 'you wouldn't believe the skill that goes into creating these demos, though...'



(1-4) ALL CODING IS MADE VIA THE PC, WITH THE RELEVANT INSTRUCTIONS COMMUNICATED OVER TO THE YAROZE, WHERE THE FINAL RESULTS CAN BE SEEN.

machine, or is is radically altered to make provision for the PC adaptation? 'The two are very comparable' he explains, 'and you would want that because you'd want to be able to create something on the Yaroze that would run on a standard PlayStation. It's by no means just a black machine, though, you have to bear in mind that

machines to get them involved with it.' This could possibly lead into courses in video game design then? Holman nods enthusiastically. 'Over in Japan they have a Net Yaroze night school where they have basically a room full of machines where you can learn to use them.' Although tight-lipped, this is very much the future of the

expand the department to compensate for it. 'It's a puzzle for us at the moment as we're not sure how many people will get involved with the machine,' he says. 'Frankly, if we get a few thousand quality people using it that'll be excellent.' But with over 2000 people already awaiting delivery at the end of February, it seems

"This will all be for the greater good of the development community, with more ideas circulating it can only make things better for all concerned."

if you wanted to have a set of the basic elements of a PlayStation to work from, the kit would cost over £1000.'

CALM BEFORE THE STORM

Although the machine is still several weeks from release when we spoke, Paul has already taken over 2000 orders for the machine, and the official Yaroze site has already taken more hits than the company had expected — with a handful of unofficial sites already appearing to complement Sony's own. The Yaroze is only available directly from Sony, and there are no plans for it to go into retail, mainly because Sony want to establish a close relationship with its users. The machine is also likely to broaden Sony's horizons, with the company looking to install Yaroze set-ups with universities and schools: 'it's something we're very keen to do,' affirms Holman. 'One of our ideas is maybe to donate



Yaroze in the UK as far as Sony see it, and yet another source of software to prolong the PlayStation's life.

Forward thinking.

Even though Paul and his team seem calm, it is apparent that it's the calm before the storm. His team comprises of just six people at the moment, but if the machine proves a success he is ready to

obvious that the current team won't be able to cope. Paul's team covers every aspect of the machine's launch, with two long-term Yaroze users drafted in for queries, and another dedicated to the web site, keeping it updated with all the latest information. The remainder oversee the production and delivery of the machine, and the everyday tasks needed to keep the product moving.

**SITE FOR SORE EYES**

By far the most important factor in the Yaroze's success will be the web site, and the information made available through it. Paul and Sony see that the world wide nature of the Internet will make for a global user group who can swap ideas, and place new information regarding routines on bulletin boards. It could also add a band-style influence to the supposedly anorak-wearing development community. We can imagine it now 'programming team requires graphic artist specialising in gore.' Holman sees the Internet service as the single most important factor of the machine's success. 'I think people see the Yaroze as the starter kit hardware' he offers.

'I think it is the least important thing in the whole scheme, whereby the important key that will make it all happen and allow people to work together is the Internet. The real goal for the site is to make the Yaroze usable by people all over Europe, and to allow them to exchange ideas, swap programs, and also to give more info on the whole scheme.' Blimey, at this rate they'll spread peace on Earth, too! The Internet system is set to be constantly updated, and Holman is equally enthusiastic about the close-knit relationship Sony are hoping to instigate between themselves and the users. The web



site, for example, will allow users to post recent work for advice on how to rework it, and discussion groups can solve technical problems en masse. 'One of the ideas we've had,' continues Holman, 'is to have a regular competition, whereby the members themselves pick the

well received, but there have been a few critical opinions of the machine's 2Mb of RAM. Holman is quick to seize on this: 'The limitations are the same as those of the normal PlayStation,' he shrugs. 'We're not trying to produce a "kid kit" here, we're trying to create a professional developer environment, and if we have people who are developing Core's *Tomb Raider* or Psygnosis' *WipEout*, they still have to



work within limitations, and they have to make games that work within the 2Mb available.' One area where the Yaroze does score well, though, is through its development language which allows Sony to pass on their expertise to make life easier for home users. The machines uses special system calls which act as short cuts for the developers, and Holman is justifiably proud of these. 'All the function calls within the Yaroze are the same as the ones professional sys-

'I think it (the Yaroze) is the least important thing in the whole scheme, whereby the important key that will make it all happen and allow people to work together will be the Internet...'

best examples of work to go through so far, with a prize awarded to the winner - perhaps working here, for example.' So that way Sony can pick up the cream of the crop? While Paul Holman is the first to admit everything will benefit Sony, he also feels very strongly that the development community and the software industry will benefit in the long run. 'This will all be for the greater good of the development community,' he says, 'with more ideas circulating it can only make things better for all those concerned.'

For the most part, the Yaroze has been incredibly

tems,' Paul begins, 'so when Sony and the third-parties first started developing games for the PlayStation, they were working out all the things people didn't want to do, but had to use all the time, and made short cut routines to make things easier. Over time, these libraries grew and grew, and we have taken all the that routines you would need to use the PlayStation, and implemented them for the Yaroze.' Basically, any strength of the PlayStation is a strength of the Yaroze, and Holman is keen to stress that the machine makes 3D routines particularly accessible.



"Bear in mind that if you wanted to have a set of the basic elements of a PlayStation to work from, the kit would cost over £1000..."

AFTER YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY BACK WATERS, PAUL HOLMAN NOW SPLITS HIS TIME BETWEEN ASSISTING THIRD-PARTY SOFTWARE HOUSES AND SUPERVISING THE YAROZE LAUNCH.

EXPANSION POSSIBILITIES

Sony are very keen for the Yaroze to succeed, and plans for the development system are starting to extend already. The PC compatible system is due to be linked with Apple Macs to expand the user base, and the

Internet site will join with those in Japan and the US so the development community can grow even larger. New software applications are also being constantly looked at, and the marketing team are currently experimenting with the Prince's Trust for other avenues of the machine, while they are also considering releasing Yaroze-created demos on compilation CDs, providing the quality is good enough. And, no, that doesn't mean the porn-based *Space Invaders* and the like which are bound to surface sometime in June. Sony must be congratulated for this leap into the unknown, and if it all pays off the software industry will be given an even larg-

er pool of talent to dip into. But as our interview draws to a close, there's time for the most important question of all; will the Yaroze allow home users to program the likes of *Ridge Racer* and *Resident Evil*? 'If they're good enough,' he smiles.

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THE INSTALLATION GAME

Picture the scene: you've just bought a brand new PC worth £2,000, your Yaroze has just arrived by courier and now both machines are sitting next to each other on the desk. But what do all of the leads and CDs do? follow this step-by-step set-up guide and everything will become clear.

1



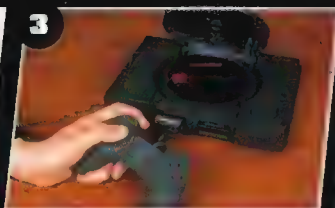
FIRST THINGS FIRST, PLUG THE YAROZE INTO THE TELEVISION OR MONITOR AND INSERT THE POWER LEAD. NEXT, TAKE THE PC LINK CABLE FROM THE YAROZE ACCESSORY PACK AND SLOT IT INTO THE SERIAL I/O SOCKET ON THE BACK OF THE MACHINE.

2



NEXT INSERT THE 7-PIN PLUG INTO THE COM PORT ON THE REAR OF THE PC. PLEASE NOTE THAT, IDEALLY, THE PC NEEDS THREE COM PORTS - ONE FOR THE YAROZE, ONE FOR A MOUSE AND ONE FOR A MODEM.

3



WITH THE YAROZE CONNECTED TO THE PC, OPEN THE MACHINE AND INSERT THE BLACK PLAYSTATION CD THAT COMES WITH THE ACCESSORY PACK. ALSO INSERT THE ACCESS CARD AND, IF YOU HAVE ONE, A MEMORY CARD.

4



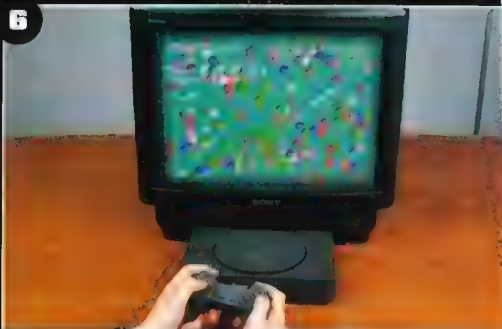
INSTALLING THE PC SOFTWARE IS SLIGHTLY MORE COMPLICATED. CREATE A FOLDER ON YOUR HARD DISK AND COPY ALL THE DATA FROM THE PC INSTALLATION CD. NOW IT'S TIME TO READ THE MANUAL TO WORK OUT WHAT'S GOING ON.

5



BEFORE THE LINK BETWEEN THE MACHINES IS MADE, AND BY ENTERING COMMANDS ON THE PC IT'S POSSIBLE TO PLAY AROUND WITH THE YAROZE SCREEN.

6



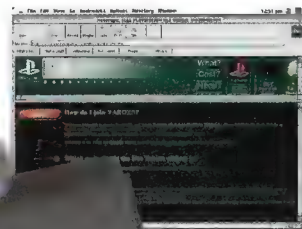
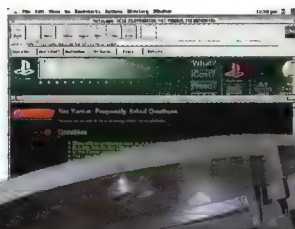
WITH A LOT OF TIME AND PATIENCE YOU CAN CREATE A BASIC GAME DEMO. IT'S STORED ON THE PC AND CANNOT BE BURNED ONTO A CD, ALTHOUGH YOU CAN INTERACT WITH THE CODE USING THE PLAYSTATION JOYPAD.

Netscap

h

olman's plans to make use of the Internet as a constant source of information are already in place, with the bare skeleton of a Yaroze site up and running. With the machine still a few weeks from release, the site currently deals with the most basic of questions, with an FAQ (Frequently

Asked Questions) page listing virtually every possible question relating to the system. However, while this is fine for tidying over the users until the machine is out, the site is set to explode into virtually every direction imaginable after the February 28th release. Holman and his team plan to use the web site to answer every problem imaginable, and it will also



What You Get

£549 is a lot of money, especially when a standard PAL PlayStation costs just under £200. Unsurprisingly then, you get more than just a smart looking black PlayStation for the Yaroze's sizable price tag. In

fact you get everything needed to start programming your own PlayStation game, apart from the PC and a basic knowledge of the programming language C.

The machine itself looks slick. Boasting a cool charcoal grey finish as

opposed to the standard drab exterior, the surface of the machine is textured, giving it a feeling of quality rather than plastic tackiness. Otherwise the



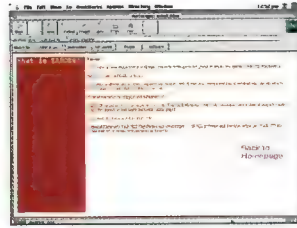
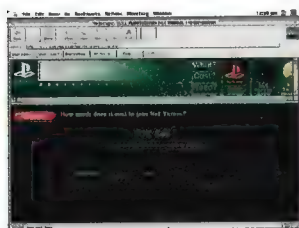
e: SCEE PLAYSTATION NET YAROZE INFORMATION

feature discussion groups and bulletin boards where users can converse and discuss problems or solutions.

Then, as the machine becomes more established, the site will act as a showcase for the machine, with users able to download or upload work, and new additions to the software supplied with the machine regularly available to ensure that all users are kept up to spec. A Links page is also being prepared, so users from all over the world can discuss the machine with Japanese or American Yaroze owners, while software houses may eventually use the site to locate new talent for the next generation of games. From Sony UK's end, the main serv-

er machine is up and running, and even before the machine is out the page has had several thousand hits already. Sony's marketing team are also quick to capitalise on the possibilities the 'Net allows. 'This is an incredible talent resource,' offered Managing Director Ray Maguire, 'and Britain, as games developers abroad are aware, is a particularly rich vein. Net Yaroze is about helping young creative gamers design their own games and take the first steps in video gaming.' So, far from dismissing bedroom programmers as has been the industry norm for the past few years, it seems Sony are set to welcome all comers into their fledgling development commune.

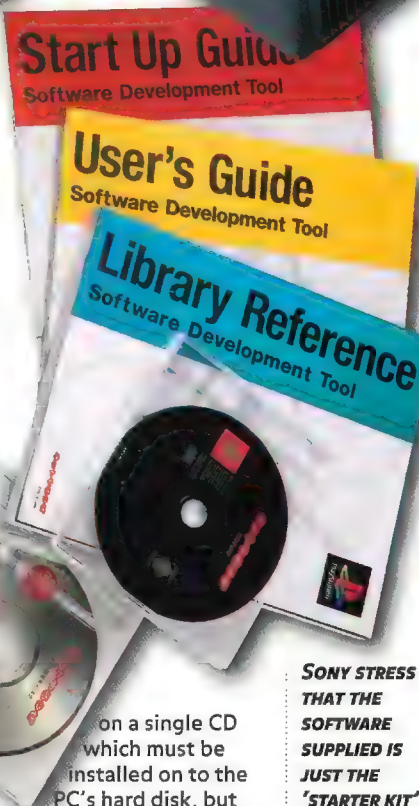
THE OFFICIAL YAROZE SITE IS UPDATED BY SONY ON A REGULAR BASIS, BUT ALREADY A COUPLE OF UNOFFICIAL GROUPS HAVE STARTED TO EMERGE.



machine is externally the same, bearing the same joypad slots and sockets on the rear of the unit. The two joypads that come with the bundle are finished in the same charcoal grey colour but are otherwise identical to standard pads, as the power lead and the aerial cable.

And then there's the access card. Initially looking like a memory card, the access card plugs into the sockets above the joypad port and essentially authorises communication between the PC and the Yaroze - without it the unit is useless.

In addition to the main PlayStation you also get the various software tools and leads needed to get the whole thing up and running, the link cable connecting the PlayStation and PC together via the serial I/O and COM ports. All the software applications are stored



on a single CD which must be installed on to the PC's hard disk, but this is also useless without the three manuals which give a step-by-step guide to creating your own game. Ah, if only it was that easy...

SONY STRESS THAT THE SOFTWARE SUPPLIED IS JUST THE 'STARTER KIT' WITH IMPORTANT UPDATES AVAILABLE VIA THEIR YAROZE WEB SITE.



The Price of Programming

Unsurprisingly, programming a PlayStation game is a costly business. First there's the black machine itself – and at just under £550 the Yaroze is more than double the price of an ordinary PlayStation, but that's just a snip of the total cost involved. Although the price of PCs has dropped in the past few years, forking out for a high-end machine will set you back at least £1,500, probably more if the PC is to remain up-to-date for the next couple of years or more.

A 66MHz 486 is the minimum spec machine needed to work with the Yaroze, but a PC of this calibre is already out-dated, surpassed by the infinitely more powerful Pentium range. Therefore a Pentium 90 or better is recommended, although a PC with a 166 or 200 MHz processor is preferable. A CD drive is of course essential, as is Internet connection to provide access to Sony's Yaroze Web site, and like the machine itself, this sort of technology does not come cheap.

In fact, it'll cost you almost £3,000 to get a Yaroze up and

running, for those who don't already own a PC.

Of course it is possible to get hold of a PC for slightly less, but then a lower spec machine will soon be phased out in favour of something more powerful. Slower modems are also available, but again a decent modem speeds up the process of wading through Sony's Yaroze web site which will, in time, contain software updates and and short programs demonstrating the power of the machine. As for the memory card, it's purely an optional extra that cuts down the translating time.

So, if you want the complete Yaroze set up, here's how the cost breaks down:

£2,100

£150

£549

£19.99

£2818.99

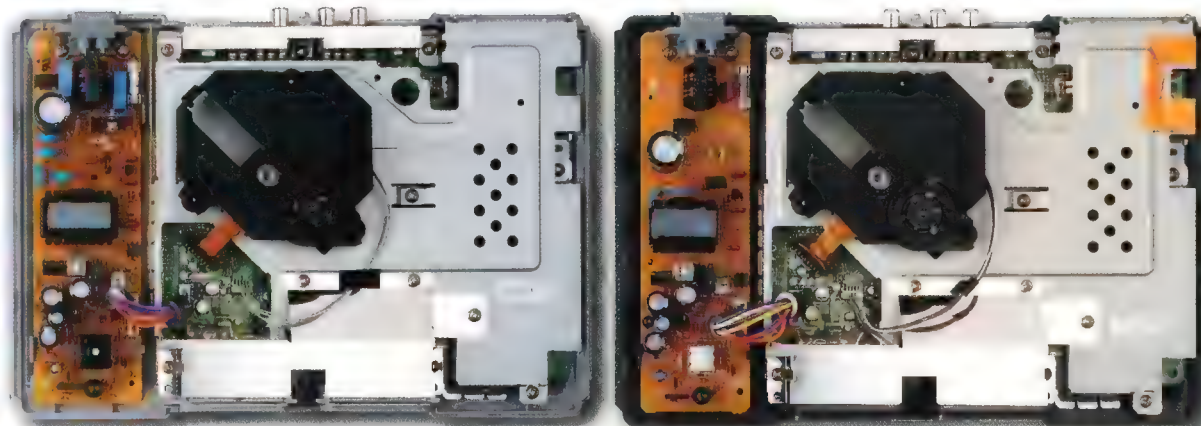


FOR MORE INFORMATION OR A QUOTE,
CONTACT THE CHICAGO COMPUTER
COMPANY ON 01234 828882.



THE INNER WORKINGS...

THE YAROZE'S CASING FEELS SHOT-BLASTED AND IS CONSIDERABLY ROUGHER TO THE TOUCH THAN THE CONVENTIONAL MACHINE.



SHOWN ABOVE ARE THE INNARDS OF A 'NORMAL' GREY PLAYSTATION (LEFT), AND THE NEW YAROZE UNIT (RIGHT). THE TWO MACHINES ARE REMARKABLY SIMILAR IN CONTENT, WHICH WAS A DELIBERATE PLOY BY THE CREATIVE TEAM. ANYTHING CREATED ON THE YAROZE COULD FEASIBLY BE RELEASED AND RUN ON THE ORDINARY PLAYSTATION, HENCE THE NEAR IDENTICAL NATURE OF THE CONTENTS.

Easy as ABC?

“My initial thoughts were that the machine was really good, not only visually but also for programming. Just by looking at the manual it seemed to be capable of a lot of things – obviously there’s a lot of work to do to get something out of it, but basically the Yaroze is able to do

got to be clued up on maths and matrices to cope with the 3D, but you can get sprites bouncing around pretty quickly, which is encouraging – it’s not like banging your head against a brick wall.

“The hardware was extremely easy to set-up and, as long as you know your way around DOS, the software

the moment you’ve got to do it all yourself.

“In fact the main program that communicates between the machines is a DOS program, the only two Windows programs are the graphics conversion applications, so to actually code you need to be fluent in DOS.”

The Yaroze isn’t designed

get around this, by coding a single level to a high quality, then doing other levels that load up separately. You can then take the code to Sony or another developer to prove how good you are, so if you can write one great level you can hopefully get the game commissioned.”

So in theory, can anyone come up with a great game? “Over a weekend you can knock up something basic like Telly Tennis, and once you’ve learnt the system calls it won’t take too long to create something a little more impressive. It’s also good because everyone is working with the same machine, everyone has got just as much chance of coding a decent game as anyone else. You don’t need to be great at C programming to code a basic game either.”

The Yaroze sounds pretty good from a punter’s point of view, but surely the price tags is a bit expensive. Evans disagrees: “It seems a lot because you’ve got the cost of a PC on top, but the Yaroze certainly has got the potential to create something good. It is definitely worth the money. You never know, it could inspire people to get back into programming like they did with the Spectrum and Commodore 64, and that’s never been possible with other consoles before now.”

Sony hopes to **target programming enthusiasts** with the Yaroze, to revive the unknown talent that once dominated the software industry, but how affordable and, more importantly, how difficult is it to use the black machine. **PlayStation Plus** gave amateur coder Paul Evans a couple of days to knock up his own rival to Resident Evil. Here’s how he got on...

anything, to any standard, that any other programmer can do.

“First of all I wanted to see what the machine could do, but you can’t really get anywhere without reading the manuals, which were pretty heavy going. You’ve

was pretty straightforward to sort out too. The manuals are very clear too, although they don’t really go into enough depth. The Web site will hopefully rectify this problem, because otherwise there’s no sort of trouble-shooting guide.”

With the Yaroze and PC linked together, the next task is to get the two machines working with each other, which is again a pretty easy process. “Installation is easy all you have to do is copy all the programming tools across to the PC hard disk, and then you run a DOS batch program to get it running. It would have been nice to have an easy Window set-up that guides you through it, but at

to be a learners guide to programming but is instead a serious piece of kit. Therefore creating a game isn’t quite as easy as it sounds, although the Yaroze does makes it as easy for the user as possible as, Evans discovered: “The Yaroze works with system calls which are basically short cuts, so once you’ve learnt these it’s a much faster process to compile code. Obviously, to write a 3D routine you need to have a decent understanding of mathematics and matrices, but there are calls and separate routine that help you rotate objects and so on. The library is very good.

“However, you are restricted by the machine’s [2Mb] RAM, but there are ways to



"COOL BOARDERS IS SUPERB".

Mean Machines PlayStation

COOL BOARDERS



"Cool Boarders is the top one-player sports game on the PlayStation"

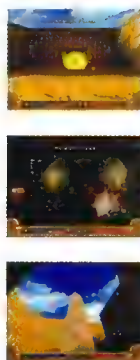
PlayStation Plus 91%



DO NOT
UNDERESTIMATE
THE POWER
OF PLAYSTATION



Exhumed

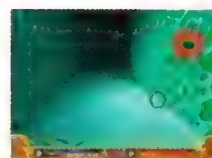
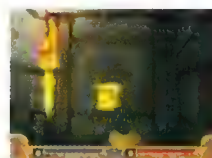
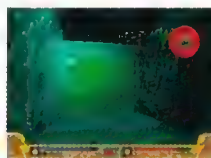


THE EFFECTS OF THE AMUN BOMB, AND M-60 CAN BE SEEN HERE, AS WELL AS A LOVELY BLUE SKY AS THE RESULT OF BEING ABLE TO LOOK AROUND FREELY. JUST THREE OF THE BENEFITS OF EXHUMED'S SUPERB GAME ENGINE.



uring 1994 a company called Id Software created a game called *Doom*, and by doing so they were to change the face of video gaming forever. They not only created a huge hit, but also created a new genre of shoot 'em up which has taken the gaming world by storm. It now seems

Release : MARCH
Company : BMG
Price : £44.00
Players : 1
Genre : SHOOT 'EM UP



that everyone is trying to claim the title of being 'the next *Doom*' although many people already think that this title has been won by one of two PC games: *Quake* (Id's successor to *Doom*), or *Duke Nukem 3D*, both scheduled to appear on the PlayStation at some point. There are concerns, however, as to whether the machine will be

able to handle either of these, since they push the capabilities (particularly the speed) of the average Pentium. This seems likely considering that the recent conversion of the PC hit *Dark Forces*, which offers both more depth and features than *Doom*, did not astound with either its graphics or its speed, although the game-

play just about made up for it. It is these three combined qualities which a game will need if it's going to compete with, and beat *Doom*. The solution may have come in the form of *Exhumed*, which if nothing else, proves that high quality graphics and speed for a game of this kind are both available if it is handled correctly.

THE TOMB OF RAMSES

Putting you in the desert boots of a one-man assault squad sent into the ancient Egyptian valley of Karnak to investigate the strange and powerful force which is ravaging the land. So far so X-Files. What you discover soon after your arrival – from the ghost of King Ramses no less, is that a race of strange beings have stolen the King's mummified corpse and are using its great magical power to fuel their nefarious schemes. Of course you're the only one who can do the job, against incredible odds etc. What this adds up to is basically *Doom* Goes To Egypt, and much much more. The setting gives you hordes of dog headed men, scorpions and yes, mummies to shoot, stab, burn and blow up as you explore the vast tombs which they protect. Not that the guardians are completely necessary, considering that they've got more traps than a 25 lane greyhound track. And what exactly are they protecting? The various artifacts that will give you extra power to defeat the evil forces as well as the keys you'll need to get to them.

THE EXPERIENCE

What's apparent from the second the game starts moving is the speed and smoothness of the game engine. In under ten seconds it knocks *Dark Forces* into a cocked hat and makes *Doom* start sweat-

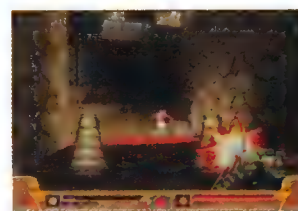
THE TOMB OF RAMSES IS YOUR STARTING POINT, WHERE YOU ARE GIVEN YOUR QUESTS BY THE FLOATING HEAD OF KING RAMSES (BELOW).



ing uncontrollably. Your lone soldier moves with the grace of Gene Kelly on rollerblades, and all this without a run button in sight. Why? Because there isn't any need for one, the days of having to keep one button permanently depressed to get a decent turn of speed are over. The graphics themselves show none of that pixilation once you get up close to walls, which has plagued a lot of

first-person shooters, and the light sourcing illuminates eerily enough to have you calling for Indiana Jones to help. The creatures themselves are bitmapped affairs, as opposed to the pretty polygons of *Tomb Raider* and the forthcoming *Quake*, but you can't have everything. The creatures vary greatly, coming at you from land, air and water. Dog men and mummies throw energy bolts

that each stage is fairly complex and host varied creations which will require you to use all of your newfound abilities if you are to get through them all alive. Navigating these is done by using a heads-up display map similar to that seen in *Dark Forces*. This can be brought up at any time and overlays the main view so you can see where you are while in the middle of a fire fight.



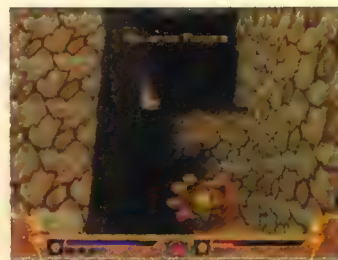
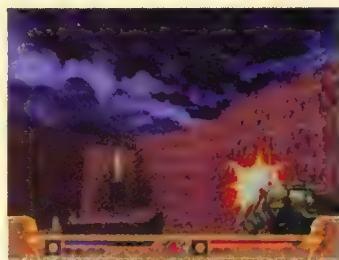
ACCESS AND AREAS

The levels themselves aren't played through in a totally linear fashion. They are inter linked across a vast map, and although once one is completed you are granted access to another, you will find yourself revisiting old levels to find new exits to other locations. The exits themselves are marked by camels (no,

DEATH ON THE NILE

As the *Doom* clones grow in numbers, so do the variety of the weapons which they arm you with. *Exhumed's* difference is that while all the weaponry is remarkably different, the ammunition for them is the same. By picking up the weapon power globes left about the place, you can reload whichever of your weapons you have currently

selected. While this ensures that you're not constantly looking for M60 ammo, it means that you are forced to think tactically as to which weapons need reloading once several of them are depleted. These are the weapons you'll find in the early part of the game, but there's another four out there...



MACHETE

Your starting weapon, so naturally it's pretty useless, slashing weakly from side to side, and only much use against pots. It doesn't use weapon power, but if you're reduced to using this then a hasty retreat is in order.

PISTOL

You pick up this weapon soon after starting the game. Its slow rate of fire is only really effective for taking out scorpions and eagles, and once you've picked up the M-60 it'll be relegated to simply breaking pots open.

M-60

You'll be using this powerful rapid firing machine gun most of the time. It chews through ammo quickly though, so as they say in Aliens 'short controlled bursts', although it is fun to strafe the area with abandon occasionally.

AMUN MINES

Similar to the thermal detonator in *Dark Forces*, these grenades are useful for taking out strong enemies or groups of weak ones. Its range increases the longer you hold the fire button before releasing it.



THE LIGHTING EFFECTS HERE EASILY BEAT ANYTHING THAT DOOM MANAGED TO THROW ON THE SCREEN AND TAKES US FIRMLY INTO TOMB RAIDER TERRITORY.

seriously) which grants you a new exit point, but that doesn't mean that there aren't others. For example, certain levels will have routes which cannot be accessed because they are too high to jump to, or they entail swimming for such a long period that you would drown before you. There are however other routes which will allow you to go to areas where you can get artifacts which will give you the power to reach these other routes and continue your quest. The artifacts and weapons are the key to your quest, and as you grow, so does the game itself. The weapons are a variation on the usual arsenal, but there is a chaingun to be found in the form of an M-60, as well as your standard issue useless pistol, but there are a lot of other more mystical

weapons, giving you an armoury that seems half *Doom*, half *Hexen* in its entirety, but there are touches of originality like the flamethrower, which should give those dry, tinder like mummies something to think about. The ammunition for the weapons comes in the form of blue orbs of weapon power which are found in the bodies of dead enemies, but more often inside small pots which are scattered throughout the levels. When smashed, they reveal a random object which could either be extra health, extra weapon power, a small creature or nothing at all. There is also a complete map of the level which is kept in one pot on a level. This means that smashing pots is the equivalent of the chance card in Monopoly: you might find a bonus that will save you, but there's just as much chance of it being something that will bring you down. There are also explosive pots against weak sections of walls, these will make quite a bang when they go up and should be taken out from a distance. This means that your eyes should be kept open for any possible secret passages as well as looking out for traps.

Exhumed then, looks to be a game which should tide over those gamers who are already chomping at the bit for *Quake* and *Duke Nukem*. It has a great deal to offer in terms of extras and action, and of course the game engine, which may prove that not only is there life in the *Doom* genre yet, but that a

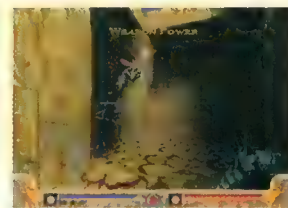
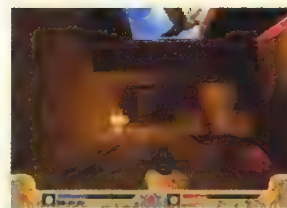
RUN LIKE AN EGYPTIAN

You'll come up against a great variety of enemies as you explore the various tombs and ruins. Unlike *Doom* they don't come in huge numbers at first, but don't worry about having enough challenge, they're powerful enough to keep you more than busy. The bigger ones aren't so plentiful at the beginning, but there're often backed up by a crowd of smaller foes. This is a selection of the fiends you'll face.



SCORPIONS

While these annoying creatures are easy to kill, they crop up in large numbers, and their lack in the size department means that you'll have to back up a bit to shoot them.



BIRDS OF PREY

These vengeful birds aren't really too much of a threat, and you'll be alerted by their shrieks as to when they're diving at you. Not too common either.

MUTANT FLIES

The faster, more deadly cousin of the birds of prey, *Mutant Flies* come at an angle just above your gun's natural level. So make sure you aim up and shoot fast.



ANUBIS GUARDS

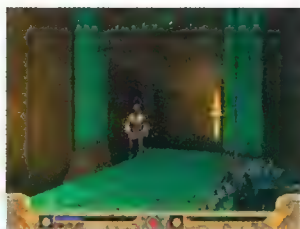
Your most humanoid of opponents. By shooting bolts of energy from a distance, these half man half dog-type creatures really are pretty deadly. Up close – take a wild guess.

MUMMIES

Fearsome is not the word. Well actually it is, because these walking corpses fire guided missiles which cannot be destroyed and do not give up until they hit something. Be afraid, and be fast.

game doesn't actually have to be a polygon fest to make your jaw drop. *Exhumed* has already been released to massive accolades on the Sega Saturn, although the lack of decent *Doom* clones on Sega's machine doesn't give it too much competition, and so, if it can make a mark

in the crowded PlayStation market then BMG will certainly have something to shout about. Let's just hope that when it gets into the shops it's good enough to make the competition start packing their bags and heading for the outdated game retirement home.



"SELL YOUR GRANNY AND PLAY
TOBAL NO 1 TILL YOUR FINGERS BLEED".

Play Magazine 94%

TOBAL No. 1™

"The quest mode is a superb addition to the game,
and makes for some late nights as it's really tough to complete"
Mean Machines PlayStation



DO NOT
UNDERESTIMATE
THE POWER
OF PLAYSTATION

The City of Lost Children

two years in the making and potentially looking rather neat for all that trouble and time, pre-release information regarding *The City Of Lost Children* has finally reached our shell likes here at the *PlayStation Plus* office. Although not yet developed to a playable stage, Psygnosis have announced that this ambitious project has been tentatively scheduled for a release sometime during the first quarter of 1997.

Made by the talented team that produced the award winning art house picture *Delicatessen*, *The City Of Lost Children* is set within a strange but wondrous world that has been described as a mixture between Jules Verne and Charles Dickens. Although this film was released some time ago now, *PlayStation Plus* reported on the project an age ago in Issues two and three and has been left waiting with eager anticipation ever since. Here's all that we have managed to uncover to date.

TO OPEN

Wanting to closely follow the solid theme of the film, the production team never the less decided that the game should go its own way to a certain extent and stand up on its own merits.

Preserving the atmosphere of the story and sticking with the marked personalities of characters, a distinct and compelling 3D universe was created to enable players to feel that the experience is unique and fully interactive. The idea, according to the Psygnosis

Release : MARCH '97
Company : PSYGNOSIS
Price : £44.95
Players : 1
Genre : ADVENTURE



press bods is to allow a wide feeling of freedom within the adventure and give the impression that you are the movie's leading actor.

Ten year old orphan Miette, recognisable in her distinctive Mothercare red stripy dungerees must find and set free a group of captured children. What has happened is that evil professor Crank, who is unable to dream, has kidnapped the youngsters and out of jealously, has taken their ability to dream. Miette is bossed around by her school teacher, Siamese twin sisters called Octopus, and following her instructions will achieve certain goals, but other routes are also available.

Moving around in real time within a 3D world there are 19 other characters whom Miette must meet and interact with if she is to set those poor little children free. Approaching the creation of graphics with an eye on realism, all of the cast are generated using motion capture techniques. This involves sensors fitted to certain areas of actors' bodies, then filming the cast performing actions required in the game.

Data of plotted points supplied by this method acts as a skeleton for artists to design bodies around, fleshing out realistic people rather than



relying on sprites. Animation Director Philippe Tesson thinks his team has successfully captured the essence of the movie's stars, but he says that certain subjects such as the Siamese twins presented problems of producing live footage of artificial creations. For instance the two dancers used as the basis for the twins had to be taped to each other whilst being filmed so that when they moved they didn't collide.

So the programmers behind the building of characters have placed a great deal of emphasis on solid and believable citizens within their shadowy city. This is an essential process if the game is to reach out to adventurers and drag them down into such a fantasy world. Playing this genre of game will takes hours of concentration and prove fairly slow moving in comparison to say a shoot 'em up, so the mind needs to be lost in the atmosphere. In this respect, *The City of Lost Children* looks on target.



NO MEAN FEAT

Production Director Carole Faure has recently admitted that producing a game from such an influential film constituted a major challenge. Although making a game from the flick seemed an attractive idea to the team of programmers, with lavish and intricate sets and well defined characters apparently ideally suited to a successful video game, the task was by no means simple. How's this for a hectic schedule; work began on the game the very moment that a script arrived in the office and was actually taking place at the very same time as the film was being made. If the project had been undertaken in isolation, then this shouldn't have posed to be too much of a problem, but most of the cast and crew were actually involved in the production. Co-director Marc Caro was even a regular visitor at the French branch of Psygnosis, offering strong advice such as: "That needs to be a bit grubbier", or "You must have a bit more rain", well what a fountain of helpfulness he must have proved to be!



A CHALLENGE FOR PSYGNOSIS IN MANY WAYS, CAST AND CREW FROM THE FRENCH FILM WERE WORKING ON THE FLICK AND GAME SIMULTANEOUSLY.



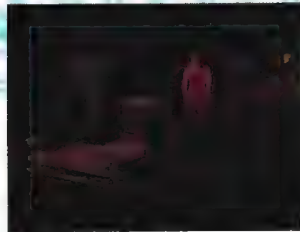
THERE ARE AROUND 100 DARK AND MYSTERIOUS SETTINGS TO EXPLORE IN THE CITY OF LOST CHILDREN. ALL ARE PRE RENDERED AND VERY DETAILED.

SETTING THE SCENE

Original set construction plans and drawings have been used by graphic artists to realise a city with post-industrial architecture which is full of exquisite and intricate detail. High resolution textures placed over complicated wire frame renderings really seem to lend an almost cinematic quality to the one hundred or so sets which can be wandered through. Many of these locations had to be created from scratch, to enhance playability and extend the game's storyline. Additional settings were overseen by film co-director Marc Caro, who explains that

film making can be frustrating as a whole world is created but the end product shows only part of it. With this game he was able to help develop many other aspects and explore more of the environment. Thus a unique experience is provided rather than just a feeling that you are being taken on a back seat tour around the film.

Designing realistic looking and moving characters, paying close attention to the way Miette is animated and building an imaginative environment that draws in the senses makes for wonderful independent appearances, but more hard graft was required to mix these features together. Full integration of characters into the set was the aim. A 3D object



super imposed onto a picture would have wasted so much of effort to construct an atmosphere that can be cut with a knife. As you'd expect, various camera angels are exploited, light sources affect views of Miette and details such as her feet exactly meeting stairs when she climbs have been included. Psygnosis philosophy has always been to pay close attention to even the smallest of details to produce a stunning overall picture.

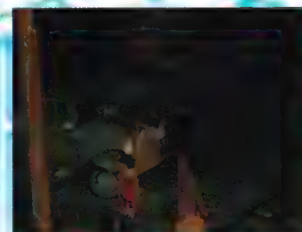
Scenes such as the mechanics yard or the suspended walk ways between buildings



are gritty and realistic. Textures of wood, concrete and metals are stunning and little additions such as faded old washing strung out on lines between apartments or broken crates floating around the docks make all the difference. Although dark and sinister, the graphics are still very clear and appear well defined. Facial features of characters look pretty human too.

CAST OF THOUSANDS

Appearances aren't the be all and end all of a high scoring game, so lots of time has been spent in the recording studios on sound tracks and voice overs. Original actors and actresses, such as Judith Vittet who plays Miette, were engaged to interpret the dialogue written for the game and they were encouraged to add personal touches. Music is provided by Angelo Badalamenti who is



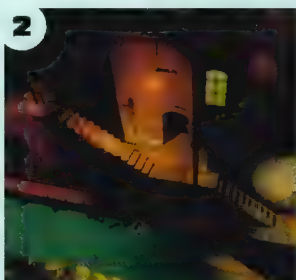
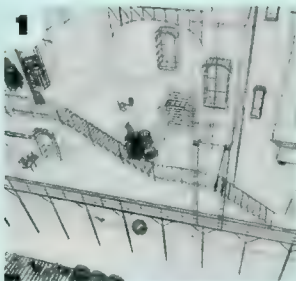
credited with scores such as the haunting theme to Twin Peaks. A diversity of effects complete the sonic dimensions, which have all been carefully timed to fit perfectly to action. Music and sound director Francis George has commented that this work was strongly comparable to the processes he regularly uses in the cinema. Expect then to be sucked into the fantasy and rivetted to your TV without noticing.

It is claimed that *The City Of Lost Children* has a plot that twists and turns all over the place, with loads of puzzles and mysteries waiting to be solved. Certain sections call for very logical answers and at other times more lateral thinking is required. Cyclops monsters block off important areas, dogs need taming, money needs to be taken from a lighthouse keeper and pulley systems present more than a few problems. We could give stronger details of how these obstacles should be tackled, but that would give the game away, wouldn't it? Psygnosis say their adventure will take weeks to complete and promise gameplay that will be highly absorbing. The plot should contain no frustrating dead end situations, with plenty of paths to choose from.

This project perfectly demonstrates why so few adventure games of a really high calibre ever make it onto consoles. Cutesy RPGs do get fairly complex and can take

many months to design, but this kind of planning and programming takes development teams much longer to achieve results with the addition of awesome injections of cash. All of this time and money could all still be a waste of course if gameplay isn't finely tuned or potential customers aren't grabbed by the concept. With such an experienced and professional software company at the helm and so much help provided by the movie makers, *The City Of Lost Children* is likely to be a storming product. As for the customers, Psygnosis will just have to cross their fingers and wait. It may well be that PlayStation owners are ready for a cerebral challenge that looks as if it has been finely crafted by a great artist.

THE BUILDING OF A CITY



THE WAY THIS GAME'S CITY SCAPE WAS DEVELOPED IS SIMILAR TO HOW AN ARCHITECT WOULD DESIGN BUILDINGS. PRECISE POSITIONS OF WALLS, STAIRS, WINDOWS, MUST BE LABORIOUSLY PLOTTED ON A CAD PACKAGE BEFORE ANY REALISTIC TOUCHES CAN BE ADDED.

A close inspection of these complicated wire frame models will perhaps explain why *The City Of Lost Children* has been at the development stage for so long. Each of the 99 pre rendered sets used in the game had to be carefully modelled in much the same way as real buildings are designed before high resolution textures could be mapped over the top, followed by the positioning of various lighting effects. Maps and plans from the film made the task a little easier, but ten new scenes had to be invented which were faithful to the original City. Take a gander at these three shots and shudder at the number of hours that went into the process.

STAGE ONE: Architecture and smaller objects start off life in CAD form as a rather confusing series of lines.

STAGE TWO: Flat surfaces are laid over mapped out points, lighting is added and things start looking a little more 3D.

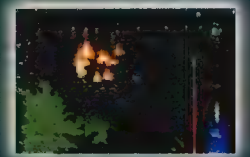
STAGE THREE: Surfaces such as brick, glass and water are given detailed textures and the picture is complete.

SUCCUMB TO YOUR DARKER SIDE

"The best action adventure game since Tomb Raider."

"A game so chilling that you need gloves to play it."

"It's more haunting than Resident Evil and more violently graphic than Doom."



BLOOD OMEN
LEGACY
OF
KAIN



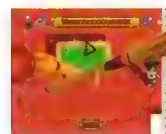
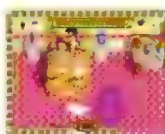
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Swagman



despite impressive technological leaps with hardware and amazing new methods of programming, old fashioned adventuring games utilising a forced 3D perspective seem to be making a come back at

Release : APRIL
Company : CORE DESIGN
Price : £44.95
Players : 1
Genre : ADVENTURE



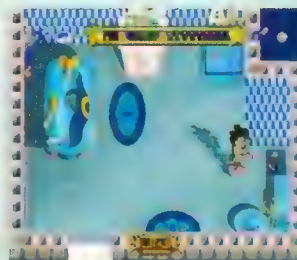
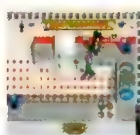
the moment. First seen in arcade machines such as *Gauntlet* about ten years ago, these viewed from above productions proved enormously popular on home computers during the 1980s – remember *Attic Attack*, *Sabre Wolf* and the 1001 other variations available back then?

Using innovative techniques, genres are now continually being reinvented beyond all recognition, but recent releases such as *Legacy of Kain* have shown how some development teams want to go back to basics. After a development period that began on Sega's

32X over two years ago, Core Design is about to release a brand new forced 3D perspective adventure. Although the code that has so far been completed looks pretty polished and does show off a few special effects, *Swagman* pays tribute to its heritage and is undeniably old skool.

FIGURE IT OUT

As Core Design are hoping that *Swagman* will appeal to a whole range of different people, the puzzles and riddles contained in the game should be easy enough for anyone to work out. Often some of the objects that are hidden can actually be seen even if they're not immediately accessible. For instance, a key has visibly been dropped behind the transparent shower curtain in the bathroom and retrieving the object is simply a case of waving about the old magic torch. Other simple tricks to get through levels include keeping your eyes peeled for any damaged sections of walls and paying close attention to the wisdom of the bug collection leader, Scarab. Here's an example of how one of the stumbling blocks, encountered very early in the first level of the game, can be overcome:



Zack visits the bathroom, dispatches a bucket load of monsters then finds a key and plastic explosives.



In one of the spare bedrooms close by he spots a bit of peeling wallpaper, but the area is blocked by a bed.



BEDTIME STORIES

Aimed at a younger audience, the story line has more than a hint of creepy bedtime fairy tales about it. Swagman, Prince of nightmares, backed up by his dark army of Night Terrors, has imprisoned the Dreamflight fairies in order to commence a full scale invasion of the Real World. Dreamash has been released onto the land, creating bad dreams that can only be neutralised by the dreamdew once used by the captive fairies. If the good folk of Paradise Falls are ever to be awakened from their nightmares, brother and sister team Zack and Hannah must plan a rescue mission to free the little winged creatures.

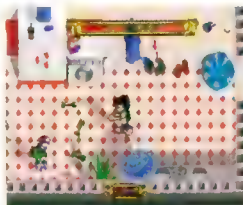
As the Swagman is breaking free from his own weird dimension and starting to lurk in the shadows of the real world, night time has become a dangerous time for children to play. Faced by freakish demons and a reality that is splitting apart beneath their feet, Zack and Hannah have no choice but to take up the challenge of rescuing the Dreamfly and her ten strong Dreamfly troop. Armed only with satchels full of childrens toys, the youngsters have their work cut out.

Main programmer Chris

Long and designer Richard Morton, both say they were greatly inspired by the work of Batman creator Tim Burton whilst making the game. Certain aspects of *Swagman*, such as the spiralling alternate dimensions that drop away through broken floor boards, or the odd stick like monsters, strongly show influences from the 'Nightmare Before Christmas' and 'Beetle Juice'. Besides trying to capture this kind of twisted neo gothic feel, the musical composer Nathan McCree, who worked on *Tomb Raider*, has emulated the quirky and atmospheric score used in Burton's creations and the machine seems to make use of a whole orchestra of sounds. Core had intended to include sampled speech, but this idea turned out to be unrealistic considering the huge amount of text that would have been needed to be spoken in English, German, French and Japanese.

DOUBLE THE FUN

In a similar fashion to the *Lost Vikings* series



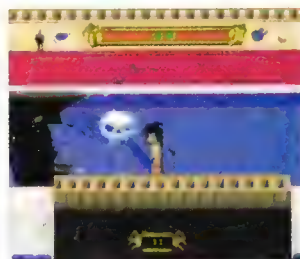
of games, players are able to swap between the eight year old twins Zack and Hannah in order to solve a variety of puzzles and riddles. At the beginning of the game, a way must be found to free Hannah from behind the bars of a tiny bird cage. Once this task has been completed, obstacles such as a door that is only temporarily opened by a distant pressure panel, or ledges that are out of reach for one of the characters but which would be accessible if they stand on each others shoulders, can be completed with both of the childrens' co-operation.

Wandering around the relatively sane surroundings of Paradise Falls, the player soon discovers that the game offers two distinct styles of gameplay. Using mirrors that act as trans-dimensional portals, it is possible to enter the Swagman's Territories. Once through these gateways to another world, Hannah and Zack are transformed into powerful Dreambeasts with all sorts of abilities and powers to play around with. At this stage in the proceedings, puzzles give way to more action related gameplay.

HIDE AND SEEK

To make their journey through Nighttime even more troublesome, the Swagman has stolen several of the twin's most treasured possessions and hidden them through out the real world. Once discov-

WITH SIMPLE PUZZLES TO SOLVE, FAIRIES TO RESCUE AND DREAMBEASTS TO BATTLE AGAINST, YOU MAY HAVE ALREADY GUESSED THAT THIS GAME IS AIMED AT A YOUNGER AUDIENCE.



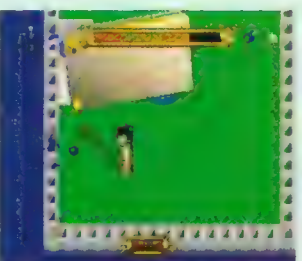
ered, these items can be swapped between each characters backpacks and used in a number of ways. An on-screen pop up inventory shows all of the collected objects, which include the Fantastic Frisbee weapon, Super Sneakers speed up, Dreamcharged Flashlight to ward off ghosts and a number of Cherry Bombs that can be dropped by walls to reveal secret passage ways.



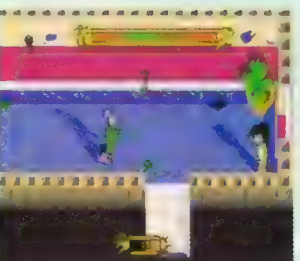
Dipping into his oversized backpack Zack selects a cluster of cherry bombs which help to clear the way.



One of the explosive devices is thrown underneath the bed, and sure enough a new route opens up.



Then another charge of explosives is carefully placed right in front of the patch of decaying wall and...



As if by magic a new area of *Swagman*, which includes a bizarre games room, is then opened up.

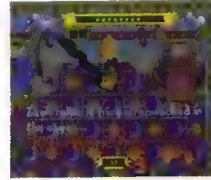
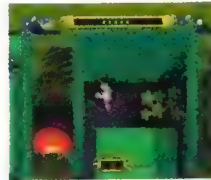
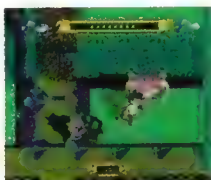
ALMOST THREE YEARS IN THE MAKING, CORE DESIGN'S SWAGMAN IS FINALLY NEARING COMPLETION. WILL THIS 2D ADVENTURE MAKE IT IN A WORLD OF POLYGONS?

Graphically, *Swagman* relies on an interesting blend of polygons and sprites to give both detail and depth to the game. Deceptively simple looking, Silicon graphics workstations were used to fully exploit hardware with techniques and effects such as transparency, rotating sprites, light sourced 3D objects, colour filtering, skewing and true casting shadows. Although not included in the current preview game, tons of FMV

A GAME OF TWO HALVES

Adventuring around *Swagman* is split into two main areas, the real world and dream world. In turn these levels are split into a further 16 sub-sections. Levels are sequentially mapped into a series of episodes that contain power ups for the children and eventually end as one dream fly is released from capture.

During the first half of the game, action revolves around the children's home and gradually more and more trips into dream world are required to progress. In the later stages a flip of the cozy Paradise Falls home, the warped Swaghouse acts as a focal point.



sequences are promised to initially set the scene and then to indicate progression.

Energy for the characters is represented by a Dreamdew bar icon. If Zack and Hannah's levels are kept topped up using the dew left behind by the fairies, certain magical items can be discovered and used. The twins also share a collective life which is measured by cartoon style Zees. When ever either member of the kiddie team suffers a hit this bar drops and when one of them dies, both are out of the game. By finding sleeping characters, such as a curled up cat or snoring parents, it is possible to nab more zees and prolong your life.

Big fans of Nintendo's *Zelda* series, which is renowned for eating up months of players' lives, *Swagman*'s team have supplied a massive environment to adventure around in. There are sixteen interior and exterior locations with 56 sub-stages thrown in. Progression through the quest relies on finding coloured keys to open locked doors, pushing objects out of the way to discover new paths and operating equipment such as transporters. A sub plot also runs throughout the game which requires the recapture of specimens from Zack's bug collection, which can then be manipulated to build useful objects, such as bridges to reach over other wise uncrossable bottomless pits.

Handily the boss bug of this collection, one Mr Scarab, can be summoned at certain points throughout



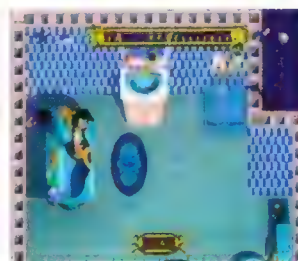
the game. Appearing in a flash of sparkling light, this wizard like figure will offer useful information and impart hints and tips to ensure that no player is left standing, pulling out their hair as they try and work out what steps to take next. For instance, right at the beginning of the adventure, Scarab pops up every now and then to let the player know exactly how to access Swagman's dreamtime universe.

From the children's bedroom paths lead to other bedrooms, playrooms and attic space, and exploring downstairs will open up the kitchen, front room and cellar areas. It is also

possible to journey outside into the garden and beyond. Each of these distinct areas has been designed with graphics sets that have their own particular feel, levels feature their own specific enemies and there are around 50 different types of foe to wipe out. Bosses such as the Undertaker or the Demon Dentist have been suitably created from typical children's nightmares.

Despite being aimed at such a young audience, if designers have faithfully followed the *Zelda* recipe, *Swagman* is sure to win some fans. At this point in the development process the game appears to capture the

Tim Burton feel that it aims for, but the potential size of the market for this product may be fairly small. Turning away from polygons and mainly opting for a pre-rendered two dimensional world could put customers off or may act as a breath of fresh air. Whether or not this project turns out to be hit remains to be seen, but one thing for sure, Core must be relieved that this nightmare game is at long last nearing its completion date.





GT
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"IT'S GOT GAMEPLAY UP TO ITS EYEBALLS"
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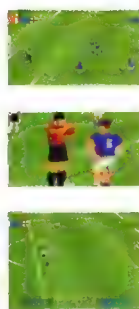
International Superstar Soccer Pro

**THIRTY TWO
TEAMS FROM
AROUND THE
WORLD ARE
ON OFFER
WITH ISS PRO.
UP TO DATE
STATISTICS
HAVE BEEN
USED TO
CREATE EACH
OF THESE
SIDES AS
ACCURATELY
AS POSSIBLE.**

generally speaking, the clutch of football games so far released on the PlayStation have been a major disappointment. Grand promises of ground breaking techniques have been made and delivered only in part by the likes of *Fifa '97* and once the final versions of these ambitious and complicated games have been released, seriously fun gameplay has been sadly lacking. Programming teams seem to have followed an agenda independent of what console users are looking for. The thing is, to us consumers watching from a distance, the

wish list looks fairly straight forward – give us something that plays quickly, looks smooth and vaguely realistic and offers plenty of moves and options.

Maybe this view is more than a little simplistic and creating a decent quality footie game is an incredibly difficult task. After all, entering lines of incorrect code



from listings in magazines into a ZX Spectrum is the closest most of us will ever get to game development. Having said that, it seems an odd situation considering that ancient and, by today's standards, toothless machines such as the Amiga and SNES have come up with the goods in the past. While



playing *Actua Soccer* or others of this ilk, fans of the sport can still be heard quietly reminiscing the likes of *Sensible Soccer* as if they were pining for long lost childhood friends.

Although it has not been long since Konami first started showing off *International Superstar Soccer Deluxe*, a copy of the sequel, *ISS Pro*, has already come to our attentions. Despite being only around 60 per cent complete, with a release scheduled for sometime around Easter, this football sim has already caused quite a stir within the *PlayStation Plus* office and it is tipped to knock *Olympic Soccer* from the top of the staff's football games league.



Release : APRIL
Company : KONAMI
Price : £44.95
Players : 1-2
Genre : SPORTS



IN THE BEGINNING

Long, long ago, in an age of 16bit technology, *International Superstar Soccer* was released onto the Super NES. Hailed as a new star, with ball blazing speed and a forced 3D perspective, reviewers and the public were suitably impressed. Words like ultimate and definitive were bandied about and many still think it has never been bettered. Perhaps for reasons of nostalgia or a perceived unfilled niche in the market, Konami began work on a version for the PlayStation and rather than make use of superior technology decided to produce an almost perfect conversion. Due for launch in a couple of months; dodgy looking sprites, strange ball properties, mushy controls and a fail safe method of scoring are unlikely to win them many friends and the series was beginning to look as if it had long over stayed its welcome.

Was *ISS Deluxe* the last best hope for PlayStation soccer devotees? Wipe those tears of disappointment from

the eyes for just a moment though and take a look towards the horizon, because at long last Sony's wonder machine may get the football game it utterly deserves – God knows we have waited long enough! Essentially only retaining a smidgen of its predecessors character, so much solid work has gone into refinements for the Pro edition that the over all result appears to be a far cry from its pedigree.

As players walk out onto the pitch at the start of the game, individuals such as Ravenelli and Gascoigne are instantly recognisable even if they have been given strange pseudonyms to avoid licensing difficulties: for example Alan Shearer becomes M.Fenwick. Hair (facial growth included) is cut in the right style, colour and length; faces are correctly shaped and even the weight and height are spot on and relative to that of their team mates. Speed on and off the ball appears quite human and roughly falls somewhere between that of *Fifa '97* and

INDIVIDUAL PLAYERS HAVE BEEN CREATED USING MOTION CAPTURE TECHNIQUES AND POLYGON BASED MODELS. THUS THE STARS MOVE REALISTICALLY AND LOOK SOLID AND DETAILED WHEN VIEWED CLOSE UP.



Olympic Soccer, which would not be a bad thing.

KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

Staying apace with current trends, all movements has been intricately motion captured to include a multitude of moves and tricks. These vary from touches such as: goal keepers wildly waving their arms around encouraging team mates up the field; fooling defenders with delicate side steps and body feints; dazzling close ball control; and acrobatic dives followed by thematically rolling around on the grass clutching injured limbs. Granted some of these

details had been brought into play for *ISS Deluxe* but that was very much in a 16bit vein and nowhere near this same level of sophistication.

So far movement also seems much more comprehensive and at the same time natural. In the Pro edition it is possible to pull off tactics such as slotting the perfect through ball into the path of a player running at full pelt, or the cheeky one two passes that split defenders. Advanced features like this will undoubtedly convey a far greater feeling of freedom and expression, something all of us have been calling for since the year dot. As you'd expect, diving headers, weighted passes, crosses, lobbs, shoulder barges, sliding tackle and a whole bunch of other skills have been catered for. Full use of these moves, attempting variations in play and tactics, may well be essential as Konami look to have considerably stepped



HE SHOOTS, HE SCORES...



NOTHING SEPARATES ENGLAND AND ITALY AFTER A TIRING 90 MINUTES OF PLAY. SUDDENLY THERE'S A MISTAKE BY THE ITALIAN DEFENCE AND IT'S ALL OVER BAR THE SHOUTING.

(1) MILLER SHARPLY INTERCEPTS A SLOPPY ITALIAN BALL INSIDE THE AREA. (2) SEEING A WALL OF DEFENDERS AHEAD HE BACK TRACKS AND MAKES SPACE. (3) TEAMS MATES ARE UNMARKED SO MILLER SLOTS A SIMPLE PASS THROUGH TO FENWICK. (4) SPRINTING BACK INTO THE BOX, HE CATCHES THE DEFENCE NAPPING. (5) FAKING THE STRIKE AND COMMITTING THE KEEPER, FENWICK OPTS FOR THE SHORT PASS. (6) THERE'S NO TIME TO THINK AND THE BOY INSTINCTIVELY GOES FOR A FIRST TIME SHOT. (7) STRAIGHT PAST THE BACK FOUR, THE BALL STRETCHES THE ONION NET AND... (8) ENGLAND QUITE RIGHTLY CELEBRATE A MAGNIFICENT WIN IN INJURY TIME.

THEN AND NOW



ISS was released on the Nintendo Entertainment System several years ago, at that time praised in almost every aspect and widely regarded as the best football sim ever to see a 16bit release. Although far from accurate, the sprites were large, recognisable as individuals and were able to pull off a variety of moves – the software seemed to take the machine to its limits. Here's three ways the programmers have pushed on the code since then: ● Characters have changed from rather awkward, jerky sprites into smooth motion captured, texture mapped polygon models. Not only does this method turn out more realistic results, once the models have been set up, new faces and kits can be laid on top relatively quickly. This keeps the look of teams up to date. ● When released to cartridge, not much space was available for sounds, so commentary was limited to the odd phrase. Speech is now fairly comprehensive and streamed directly from the CD. The 'my Granny could have done better than that' line has been retained. ● Ball movement in *ISS* was unrealistic, lacking any attempt to simulate the effects of gravity or momentum. Time has been spent on the Pro version working out equations that give the game a bypass towards simulation.

up the intelligence of all the CPU teams. A prime example of the way extra time has been spent on the *ISS Pro* is the fact that the sure fire method of scoring goals, which was to tempt the keeper out then run past him, no longer works.

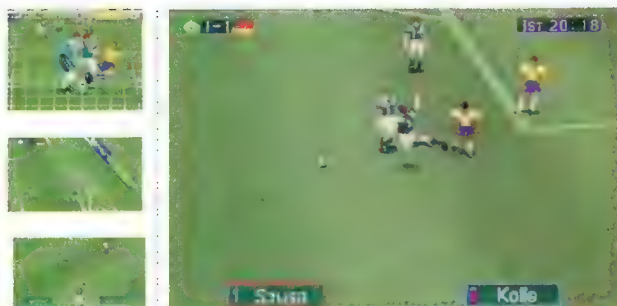
A WORLD OF OPTIONS

Thirty two world teams are available for selection based on up to date information, for instance team selection sheets, performances and general statistics from Euro 96 have been taken to form the basics of the European sides. Current kits are therefore worn by the all stars, with England sporting both white and grey strips, and national badges have even been stitched on to tops.

Four modes of game are offered after loading screens have been displayed. Exhibition matches provide quick, one-off thrills for one or two players. Embarking on an International League means 16 teams are chosen who then play a home and away match equating to a series of 30 games. After the final whistle has been blown on a league game a whole load of charts and tables pop up, displaying rankings of top scorers, with shot percentages for each player, match results cross referenced and standard league positions. In International



ACTION ON THE PITCH CAN BE VIEWED FROM FOUR ANGLES. WHEN FREE KICKS, THROW INS, CORNERS AND PENALTIES ARE AWARDED SPECIAL VIEWS ARE ACTIVATED.



Cup mode national sides are split between eight groups to fight it out in mini leagues before entering a knock out stage. By way of preparation for the inevitable draws which are part and parcel of modern football, penalty knock outs can also be practiced at this stage.

Before embarking on any of these challenges a choice of four fields is provided, which go all the way up in size to the enormous San Siro stadium. Each is modelled in full blown 3D and a digitised crowd looks on from the stands. Games can be played during the day or under the glare of flood-lighting that cast multiple shadows, in sunny, cloudy or washed out conditions.



Match length can be set for five, ten or fifteen minutes in realtime and there are three levels of difficulty. After ploughing through all these options yet more appear for tailoring formations, starting line ups and tactics, camera angles (three viewed from the side, one from behind

the goal), a toggle bar for a field radar which displays the position of squad members and a section to alter six aspects of in game sounds. Phew.

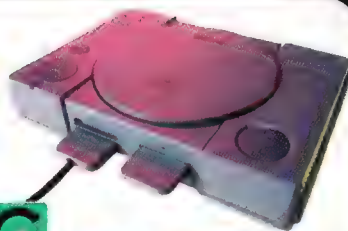
Considering the way football sims have been lining up to let us down, it would be foolish to start hoping that *ISS Pro* will be the saviour, the one that will still be in



favour in six months time and be remembered fondly even further down the road, but initial impressions are very favourable and the current code looks like offering a well rounded game. For now though lets just keep everything and anything available, crossed.

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TO APPEAR
UNDER THE
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LABEL FOL-
LOWING THEIR
LICENSING
DEAL WITH
OCEAN.



When a particu-
lar video game
genre has been
released as much
as the driving genre, you'd
think that there weren't
that many more ways to

approach it. Well, that might
be true (although the folks
that created *WipEout* might
have something to say about
that), but there's plenty of
scope for simply doing things
a hell of a lot better than any-
one else as well. As well as
this, it's about time that
someone made a racing game
again which doesn't try to be
a simulation or a parody, but
just give you some solid
playability and fun for your

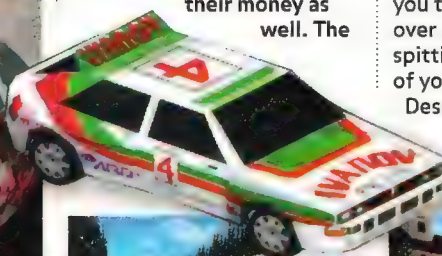
money. The forthcoming
Total Drivin' looks like it
might have all of these quali-
ties in spades, which is good
news for anyone who wants a
bit of innovation and quality
in their game. Basically it's a
championship competition
which features eight differ-
ent teams to choose from as
you race all over the world in
various classes of car. Initially
looking like a more attractive
cousin of *Ridge Racer*
Revolution and *Sega Rally*, the
depth of *Total Drivin'*'s game-
play looks like it could more
than beat these two classics
of the genre, and give a lot of
the current racers a run for
their money as well. The

tracks are set in different
countries and climates and
look absolutely stunning, the
cars are also up to the same
standard. If *Total Drivin'*'s
developers can pull off the
gameplay to go with the
looks, then we might just be
looking at a British competi-
tor to the *Ridge Racer* series.

IT'S A WORLD OF DRIVIN'

The tracks are spread over six
areas across the globe, all
with very different terrains.
You begin on The Island,
where you race 4x4 buggies
along dirt roads which rise
into the mountains and lead
you to a collapsing bridge
over a volcano complete with
spitting lava. You have need
of your buggy again in the
Desert, since at some points
there's only a road in
the vaguest sense.
This is because you'll

Release : APRIL
Company : OCEAN
Price : £49.99
Players : 1-2
Genre : DRIVING





be racing through the sand dunes before the course winds its way through a village and past an archaeological dig before heading into the valley of the kings for a look at the pyramids. The two urban areas are set in Hong Kong and Moscow, and each one is said to be modelled on their real-life counterparts as closely as geographical and architectural information will allow. This gives you a chance to race – in the case of the Moscow level – past the Kremlin before taking a look at Red Square, while in Hong Kong you can speed through the many flyovers and chicanes in the city, and then head past the bay area with the ships floating past you. You finally get to drive the rally cars on the highland level which takes you up and down hills, through forests and over hump-backed bridges with turns that will tax even the most advanced of drivers. The Alps look to contain the most hazardous tracks, since they have you contending not only with the possibility of falling off the mountain-side roads, but with the possibility of avalanches and of course the snowy weather and the slippery roads which come with it.

The weather effects themselves are another feature,



which stretch far beyond the aforementioned snow. Various weather conditions, including rain, tornadoes and even sandstorms (on the

Desert levels) make your journey just that little bit harder. If this isn't enough you'll also be racing at night, the only light coming from streetlights, moonlight and

of course your headlights.

Are there more? Once you've raced through the terrains once there's still more to see and do. There's a split-screen and link-up multi-player option so you can impress your mates, and various manoeuvres to master, such as hand-brake turns and power slides, as well as multiple routes on the tracks themselves. Just like *Ridge Racer*, there are more advanced routes through each of the terrains where the tracks branch off in different directions which alters the difficulty as you then have to learn them all over again. Later in the game there are even more hazards which enter the race, with the road being blocked by avalanches and rock falls which will require you to find a new route around (or even over) the obstacles. While all the tracks are very impressive, the real originality



comes from the fact that you drive different vehicles depending on which level you're on, ranging from the humble dune buggies all the way up to the powerful sports and rally cars, with the cars upgrading once you reach a certain level. And the cars are shaping up to be just as beautiful as the tracks with some incredible details being implicated to make them look as good as possi-

ble.

The glass in the win-

dows is transparent, the chrome work shines like it was new, and for once the cars actually have round wheels. With all the features and graphics on offer, so far this game doesn't look as if it will disappoint, but the one thing to look forward to about *Total Drivin'* has got to be the chance to drive a car on your PlayStation that doesn't look like it's sitting on four hexagons.

CLASS CARS

Instead of just giving you one car to choose from and letting you upgrade the engine as you progress, *Total Drivin'*'s car class system offers you five different types of vehicle to race with. They are all suited to the different terrain and are specific to their relevant levels. The 4x4 Buggies that you start with are used on the first Island and Desert races which suits their off-road superiority just fine thank you. They also handle nicely which lets you get the hang of the game. Later on though, you'll progress onto the Dakar Rally Class which, while being while being similar to the Buggies, are much harder to drive. They suffer from a lower top speed and acceleration and are more likely to roll than the buggies, since they have a higher centre of gravity. On the more urban Moscow and Hong Kong tracks, the buggies won't be of much use to you. The cars in the Sports Class will be though, because they're faster on the flats and you'll impress far more people if you're driving across Red Square in a Porsche than in some dune buggy. The Indy cars are the next step up from the Sports Class since they have a huge amount of engine power but their handling is quite poor, making them a choice for the more experienced driver. Finally the Rally cars are the driver's choice for the Highland and Alpine tracks, since they can handle the many twists, turns, bumps and scrapes with ease. The best all round vehicle, these are a driver's dream. Don't, however think that this means that there's just five types of car with different colours and stickers on each one. Each of the eight teams actually has their own individual car for each class. This means that when you're driving in Sports Class for instance, you could be behind the wheel of a Lamborghini while one of your opponents is driving a Porsche. And they don't just differ in looks, their performance also differs, meaning that just because you've used one team's vehicles, it doesn't mean that you haven't got anything to learn from the others. So with 40 cars to choose from and master, you're so spoilt for choice that it's almost a sin.



BEFORE YOU START PLAYING THE GAMES, YOU ARE TREATED TO A RENDERED INTRO SEQUENCE AND MENU SCREEN WHICH SHOWS YOU THE GAMES THAT ARE ON OFFER. SEE, THERE ARE SOME BENEFITS TO TODAY'S TECHNOLOGY.



Arcade's Greatest Hits: The Atari Collection 1



The fashion for retro gaming continues its unstoppable spread across the land, resurrecting games which have long since disappeared from the public eye and are remembered only as fond memories of playing games like *Defender* and *Pacman* down the local chip shop

when you were a kid. It's a reminder of where all of today's games come from, and a chance to relive our misspent youths. Of course, it's also a great excuse for companies to dig out some old games, put them out with the same shoddy graphics and smack that label 'classic' on top of them, in a search for some easy cash from older punters who think *Tekken 2* looks too complex. Whatever the reasoning behind it, there's a fair old few of these retro compilations out at the moment, from the continuing *Namco Museum* series as well as the *Williams Arcade* hits doing the rounds, and there are plenty of other companies out there just waiting to dust off their back catalogues and put them on the PlayStation. One of these is the company which arguably started it all, Atari. Nolan Bushnell founded the company in 1972 when he created the first computer arcade game *Computer Space*. For his next trick he then created *Pong*, an incredibly simple game

where two players controlled a bat at each side of the screen, knocking a ball from side to side. This made Atari into one of the biggest video games companies of the late 70s and early 80s, with a whole host of classic games under their belt. Now they've got six of them out of the vault and put them on one CD for your bygone enjoyment.

SELECTION BOX

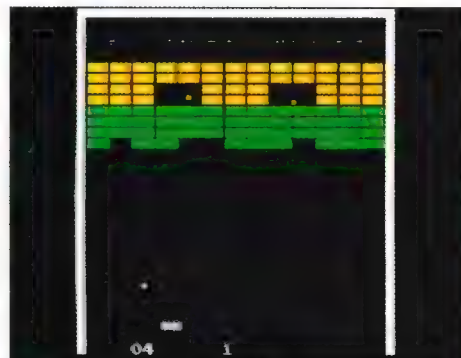
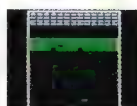
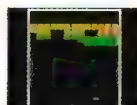
The line up is thus: *Asteroids*, *Battlezone*, *Centipede*, *Super Breakout*, *Missile Command* and *Tempest*. Most of these games will already be familiar to those of you born before

the mid-70s. But for the few of you who may have forgotten – and for those for whom video game history starts with *Super Mario* or *Street Fighter 2* – some explanation of these games is in order.

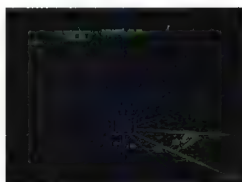
Asteroids is one the earliest games in the set, and it certainly looks it, with its very simple black and white wire-frame graphics. The principle behind it (like all the games) is a simple one. You have a spaceship in the middle of the screen, in the middle of an asteroid field where you must stay alive by destroying the asteroids before they hit you. The problem is that



Release : APRIL
Company : GT
Price : £39.95
Players : 1-2
Genre : VARIOUS



when you shoot a large asteroid it splits into two medium sized ones, when they're hit they break into two smaller ones, and when a small one is shot it disappears. This means that if you fire around like a maniac you'll end up with a screen full of rocks and a ship in pieces. Another game with wireframe graphics is one of the first 3D games, *Battlezone*. This is a one on one tank battle with a first-person perspective which requires you to find the enemy tank and take him out very quickly before does the same to you. This may sound incredibly obvious, but fans of the original will know that this game is very unforgiving and gives you no chance to catch your breath.



Centipede finally gives you some colour to look at last. Basically a cousin of *Space Invaders*, you control a little gun at the bottom of the screen which can obviously move left and right and with in a limited area, up and down as well (this might not sound like a big deal now, but at the time it was a major innovation). The screen itself is full of mushrooms which can be destroyed with a few shots. The significance of the mushrooms becomes apparent when the centipede itself hoves into view, moving across the screen until it either hits the edge of it, or one of the mushrooms, whereupon it drops down a row and so on. Your task is to shoot away the segments of the creature until it is destroyed. So far, so simple, and it is, until the other insects come onto the screen, and that's when it gets difficult as you have to contend with spiders fleas and scorpions trying to make your violent gardening a nightmare. There's more shooting action in *Missile Command*, giving you control over a trio of missile bases as you try to stop the endless stream of enemy nukes from decimating your cities with your own version of the Strategic Defence Initiative. *Super Breakout* is a successor to *Pong*, and thus is one of the simplest games ever made. You control a bat

which must keep bouncing a ball against a wall made of destructible bricks. Hit the ball, break the wall, it's that simple. Finally there's *Tempest*, a game which has already had a resurgence thanks to the recent release of *Tempest X*, which is a souped up version of the original here. Offering possibly the most frantic shooting action of the whole package, your ship revolves around the playing field shooting at the aliens as they try to climb towards you. All the games are straight ports from the machines, using the original code to ensure that they look and feel the same to give that real arcade feeling.

CHOICES, CHOICES.

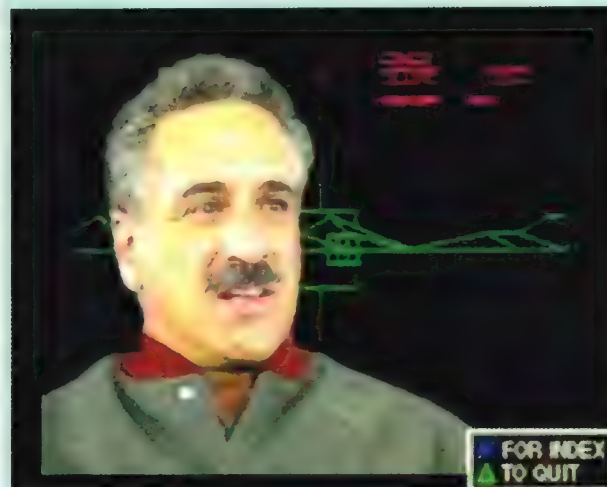
While none of the games will be souped-up versions like *Tempest X*, there are still many ways to play each game. Each one has a comprehensive options screen which allows you to play the games as nature intended. For instance, you can change the screen setup on *Centipede* and *Super Breakout* so that you can tip your television on its side to give you a view of the game just like those taller, thinner monitors from the original machines. *Asteroids*, *Battlezone* and *Tempest*, the three vector graphics games also have an option to have a sharper S-Video mode to give you more



YES, WE KNOW THE GRAPHICS AREN'T THAT GREAT, BUT THERE IS A LOT OF PLAYABILITY IN THERE. BESIDES, HOW DO THINK SOUL EDGE WILL BE PERCEIVED IN 20 YEARS TIME?

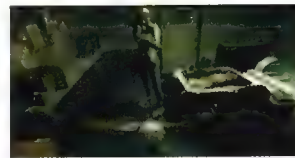
IN THE BEGINNING...

If you're wanting more value for money, or just wanting more information on the games in the package, then here's something that should interest you. In addition to the games, there's a documentary included on the disk which gives you a vast amount of information about the games as well as interviews with the people who created them. It's split into sections on each of the games, and each of these are split into 'chapters' which deal with points of interest, making it easier to find what you want to watch so you don't have to sit through loads of FMV in order to get to the point you want to see. While it's unlikely that anyone will sit down and watch it all in one go - since most people bought their PlayStations to play games on, not to watch TV - it does give a great deal of background information which will tell you a lot about the birth of video gaming.



of that original feel. There is also a thoughtful inclusion with regard to controls. Since *Centipede* and *Missile Command* were both originally played with a trackball, there is also an option to play these games with a mouse. With this kind of attention to

detail, and the fact that the games on offer are all solid classics rather than the approach of 'one game a classic, four games unknown', the Atari Hits package could restore some faith in the idea that some classics are timeless, even in this 32-bit age.

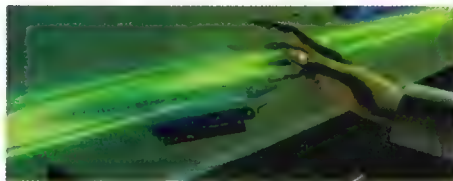
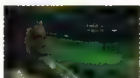


japanese developer WARP has taken an exceedingly precarious step into the world of video gaming. Rather than following the safe path and opting for a simple shoot 'em up or platform game, it has decided to enter the historically bleak realm of the interactive movie. However, WARP's brand new creation, *Enemy Zero*, looks to be more than capable of breaking the mould set by the likes of *Wing Commander III*, by actually including some real gameplay.

Secondly, if you are setting about creating an Interactive Movie, as *Enemy Zero* is, surely it's a good idea to base it on a decent 'real' movie, a film that most people can relate to. Kenji Eno, Def Leppard look-alike and coding bod at WARP, has decided to do just this, and has picked a good movie to do a take on. A classic in fact, Ridley Scott's 'Alien'

ENEMY ZERO IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM MOST OTHER GAMES IN THAT ITS ENTIRELY IN WIDESCREEN.

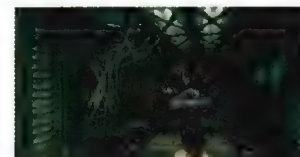
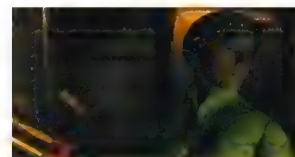
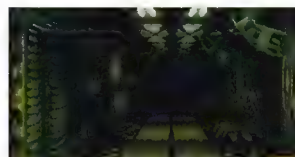
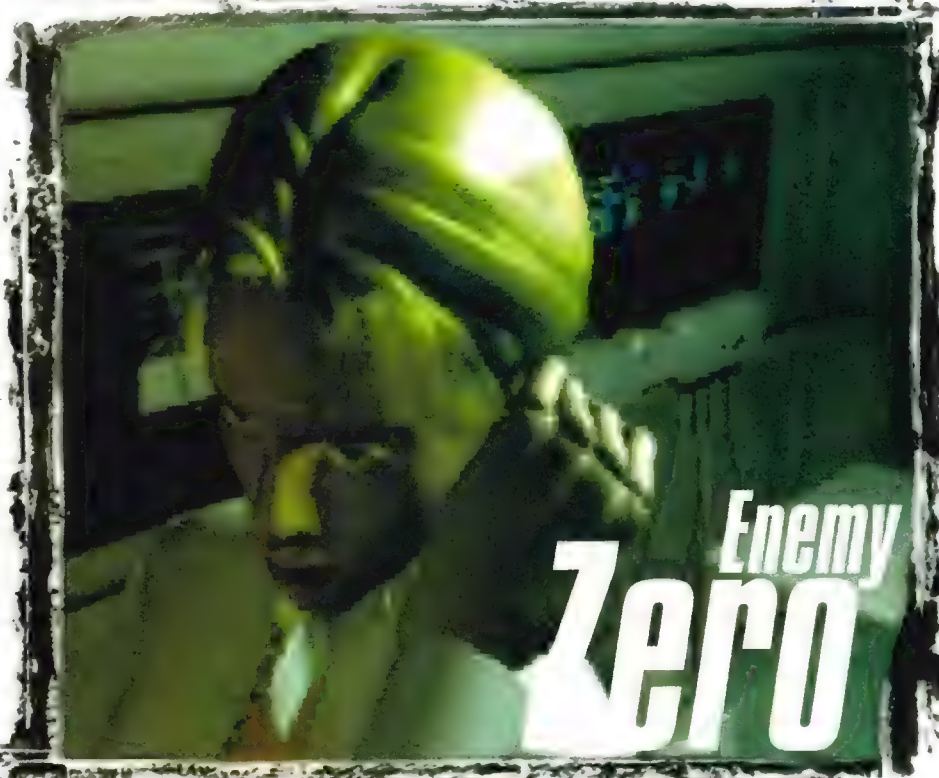
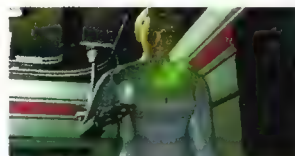
THE BLACK BORDERS MAY BE UNSIGHTLY BUT THEY INJECT ATMOSPHERE AND GIVE THE GAME A CINEMATIC QUALITY.



MOVIE MADNESS

While the Interactive Movie fell into disrepute with the antics of Tim Zito's Digital Pictures and Sega's incredibly poor Mega CD hardware, WARP has been the small Japanese software house dedicated to making something of worth of out discs full of rendered footage and limited point-and-click gameplay.

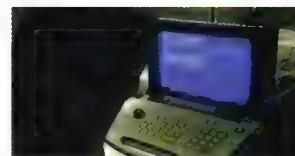
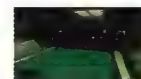
Enemy Zero is the culmination of two years work and some prestigious input. Eno



has been the driving force behind Laura, the enchanting heroine who is transplanted from WARP's first game, of a similar nature, *D*. WARP also enlisted the talents of an acclaimed TV and film scriptwriter, Sakamoto Yuki, and oscar-winning composer Michael Nyman, who came along for the ride and was responsible for going some way to producing a unique filmic atmosphere for the video game.

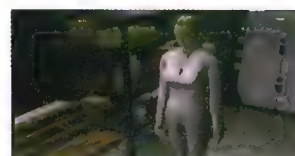
TRAVELLING AGAINST THE SAILS

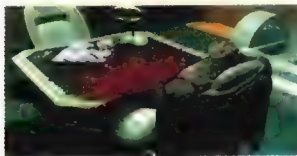
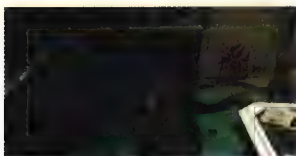
Enemy Zero is set some time in the future, on an interstellar freighter called the AKI. The seven-member crew are abruptly woken from hypersleep by an on-board emergency relating to a group of



mysterious creatures who have broken free from their hold and infiltrated the ship. Before you, as Laura, have much chance to take action, various of your colleagues meet ghastly deaths. This leaves you to tackle the overriding task of finding safe passage to the three other towers that constitute the AKI's living areas, rounding up the crew who are hidden

Release : TBA
Company : ACCLAIM
Price : TBA
Players : 1
Genre : ADVENTURE





there and then working out what the hell is going on.

Although little is known about the escaped beasts, Laura is informed that her enemies have pathological tendencies that would make even the celebrated xenomorphs think twice before having a go. They also have the distinct advantage of being invisible.

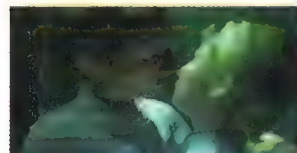
In fact, Laura's only hope is to rely on technology. Equipped with an ear-fitted motion-tracking system called VPS (Vexx Positioning System), she must explore the vast decks of the AKI, scurrying down the corridor sections of the game that link the quarters. Impressively, and in a direct tangent to the original

for staying put and waiting for help (haven't you seen the Poseidon Adventure, girlfriend?). Show her the body of her boyfriend in his cabin and she begins to buck up. Sometimes you have to be cruel to get to the next disc. Of which there might be four...or seven. It depends on what miracles of compression WARP can incorporate.

WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE

The arrival of *Enemy Zero* is welcome, for the portion of the gaming population who have a taste for this kind of meat, and also because it nearly didn't appear at all. WARP had a much-publicised

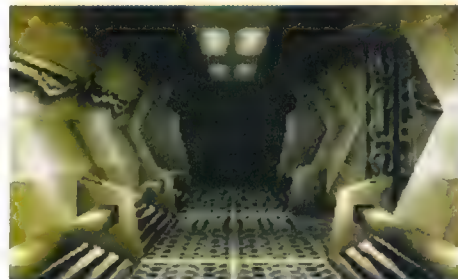
WILL THE LOVELY LAURA FIND LOVE IN ENEMY ZERO? MAYBE NOT, BUT AT LEAST SHE GETS A QUICKIE OF ONE OF HER CREWMATES.



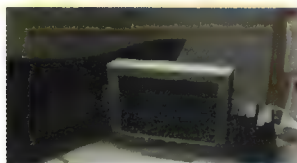
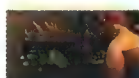
D, these exploration sections portrayed in smooth realtime 3D, *Alien Trilogy*-style.

YOUR ENERGIES CHANNELLED

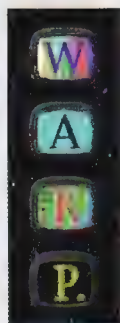
The bulk of *Enemy Zero* is spent in the pre-rendered areas which Laura has limited freedom to explore, locate objects and use by means of a simple menu system. This is also where the plot is driven, with rendered scenes of some power, violent deaths, close shaves and revelations on the later disc that suggest the whole episode is not some unfortunate accident. For the first time in a game of this sort, there is some meaningful interaction between the characters beyond the level of passing information. Although the game is only in Japanese form and absolutely no information is passing to us! The characters display their emotions too, and this is woven into your actions. Kimberley, for example, is the ship's counsellor who Laura meets. Initially she's all



falling-out with SOJ in early '96, embarrassing them at the *PlayStation Expo* by ditching plans for the project in favour of Sega Saturn. Obviously these differences have now been put aside, and PlayStation owners will have a chance to enjoy the state-of-the-art in CG rendering after all.



SPEAKING TO SCRIPT WRITER, SAKAMOTO YUJI



This is a translation of an interview that scriptwriter Sakamoto Yuji gave detailing his involvement with the project. He is famous natively for scripting the Japanese TV drama series 'Tsubasa o kudasai' (Can I have a sparrow please?). His arrival to games is belated – only this year did he personally get a Megadrive. He's now working on WARP's next project, 'Real Sound'.

YS: I started playing games just this year. I started playing games because of *D* and my interest in Warp grew. As time went on, Warp asked me to be involved in their next project, *EO*, and in a way I wish I had not got involved (he's joking). Now all the fun of finding out the plot is gone because I wrote the whole thing!!

PSP: What is your exact role at Warp?

YS: I was handed a synopsis of the game's story and was told what each character should say at each point in the game. Then I would go on to make the script and add atmosphere to the dialogue in the game.

PSP: What's the difference between writing for TV dramas and games?

YS: It's not that much different. In films and TV, I always talk extensively about the project with the directors/producers and then I go on to produce the script. That's exactly what I did for the game so there's not that much difference.

PSP: As games are full of interaction unlike films and TV, were you given any pointers about what to avoid?

YS: I had to think a lot about how the characters spoke. I had to make sure the characters spoke like a person in a game and not to look out of place. The story was there already so I just edited and changed the dialogue a little. But right now I am concentrating on writing the script for *Real Sound* (Warp's new game) and that's giving me a bit of a headache.

PSP: Is there anything else that you concentrated on?

YS: I tried to not distort or destroy the world of *Enemy Zero* created by Warp's director, Mr Lino. I didn't want to reveal the characters too much so that the games player can imagine more. So I didn't reveal the characters' details too much, just the odd hints here and there. Making the characters as full as possible was a hard task. I wanted them to be as human like as possible by having human traits and trends like having girlfriends back on Earth and so on.

PSP: Was writing the script fun?

YS: Yes. It was hugely different from all the dramas that I do for TV. It's a fresh subject as it's never been done in any drama series. It's very different from *D* in that the story in *Enemy Zero* is very important. In *D*, the story wasn't the most important aspect of the game and relied heavily on the theme of Vampires but the story in *D* is unique yet it's universal as anybody can relate to it. Take away the background settings of *Enemy Zero* and you can apply it to the present day.

PSP: Are you going to continue in the games industry?

YS: I would like to and there are games that I would like to make, even create the games myself. Perhaps I write a whole truck load of scripts and take it Mr Lino's house!! Ha, ha, ha!



THIS IS THE NEW IMPROVED EXPLORATION SECTION, WITH ITS SLICK 3D ENGINE.

PREVIOUSLY, IN D, THE ENTIRE GAME WAS PRE-RENDERED AND THEREFORE MORE LINEAR.

NHL Open Ice

Having turned the world of Basketball on its head with their icon-loaded *NBA Jam* and its subsequent home versions, coin-op developers Midway have taken a step back from their plans for a fourth *Mortal Kombat* to repeat the same formula with Ice Hockey.

on-going NHL series do, instead the emphasis is on speed, with the player simply out to slam as many pucks past the opposition's goal keeper in order to progress to the next team. This process is then repeated again and again until the user is crowned the champion of the mini-leagues on offer.

Fans of the *NBA Jam* series will be instantly at home, and the bizarre sense of humour which was prevalent throughout Midway's basketball games is even more pronounced in this faster-paced 'sequel', with the violence level upped and special moves even Gretzky can only dream of.



NHL Open Ice is thus a conversion of the little-seen (on these shores, anyway) arcade game, with the two-on-two Basketball antics of *NBA Jam* replaced with two-on-two hockey tactics – with added thrills and spills.

NHL Open Ice is probably as different from the plentiful hockey games available for the PlayStation. It has no pretensions to be a deadly serious and accurate representation of the sport as Sony's *NHL Face-Off* or EA's



Release : MARCH
Company : GT
Price : 44.95
Players : 1-4
Genre : SPORT SIM



NBA Jam and *NHL Open Ice* are like two peas in a pod. Just as *Jam* was set across a scrolling court roughly two screens wide, *NHL Open Ice*'s rink is of the same size. Similarly, the game opens by inviting the player to select their pair of players from a list of states, with each represented below by a digitised picture. *NHL Open Ice* then mimics every menu screen of *NBA Jam*, as it invites the player to enter their initials and the month for future use. In keeping with the visual similarities between the two games, it seems odds-on that Midway's usual wealth of hidden characters (Bill Clinton, developers, NBA Stars, etc) are set for cameos on the action-laden rink. In the meantime, the NHL licence, allows GT to use genuine representations of the likes of Gretzky and Lemerieux, both of whom are rated as two of the best all-rounders in the game.

The actual game is played across a horizontally scrolling rink, with the action viewed from the side. The players are entirely sprite-based, thus breaking away from the seemingly regulation polygon players which have graced 'more serious' hockey

games of late. The games are played on a two-on-two basis, with the CPU or up to three other players pitching in via a Multi-tap unit, while the goal keepers are entirely CPU-controlled, and are considerably more intelligent than the majority of PlayStation soccer 'keepers. Control over the players is simple yet surprisingly effective. The Dpad is used to guide the sprite up and around the rink, and the movement routines are incredibly well done, with a delicate balance of the inertia of the real thing tempered with fast burst of speed and tight turning circles. The facia buttons are then left to handle the passing and shooting duties, with the style of shot depending on the speed the puck is moving at and the timing of the shot, while the square button is used to force a pass from a CPU-controlled team mate if the user is feeling they stand a better chance of scoring.

SOMETHING SUPPRESSED

One of the more bizarre features of *NBA Jam* were the icons which occasionally appeared on the court. While these were a novelty to begin

THE SPECIAL MOVES AVAILABLE ARE EVERY BIT AS BIZARRE AS THOSE OF ITS SISTER TITLE, NBA JAM. SPRITES DOUBLE IN SIZE, PUCKS SIZZLE, AND GOALS BURN AS THE ACTION BEGINS TO HOT UP.



with, they soon made skill rather redundant, so, in a very wise move, they are omitted from *NHL Open Ice*'s icy surfaces. Instead, an extension of an old *Jam* trick has been used, with special areas of the court endowing the player with unworldly power if the L and R buttons are used to instigate a 'Turbo' move. In *NBA Jam*, the Turbo buttons were used for gravity-defying slams and rocket-fuelled runs, but *NHL Open Ice* uses them to exaggerate the already violent nature of the sport. For example, on approaching the goal, pressing the button enlarges the player's sprite to almost twice its normal size, with their shot power also upped. Other special touches include speed-ups which add a blur to the player to emphasise their newfound speed, or a more simple shot which scorches its way past the hapless goal keeper and ignites the net for added effect — again, a

blatant (but very welcome) steal from *NBA Jam*.

Open Ice also expands on the razzmatazz of the sport. The real sport is littered with visual tricks and tricks and tactics used to stimulate and entertain the crowd between play. While GT's game doesn't have huge inflatable animals and lottery winners, though, it does use a series of FMV sequences and MTV-style cutaway scenes to enliven key aspects of each match, including a running tally of hat-tricks, and a special award for the most consistent player (see panel).

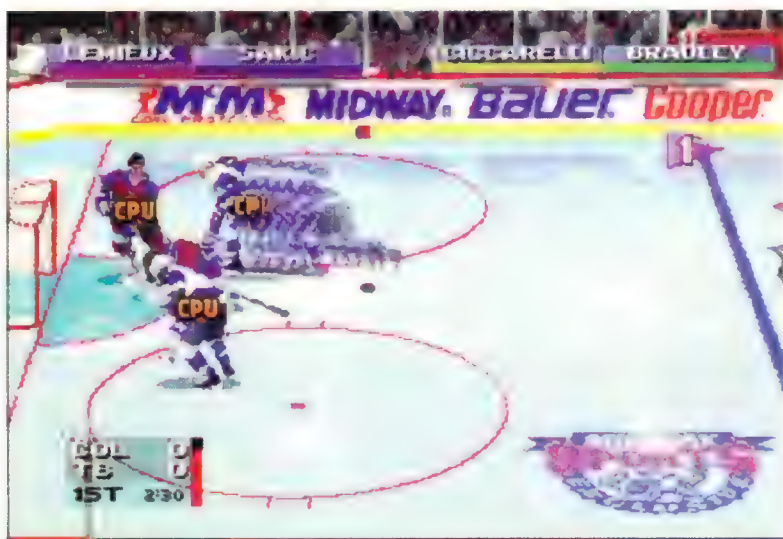
ALL-ROUNDER

NHL Open Ice benefits from its relative simplicity, in that it is quite easily the fastest of the ice hockey games available. The action takes place at a blistering pace, with the players slamming into each other and using a variety of dirty tricks to bypass the defenders. The goal keepers are also designed to be worthy opponents, and smashing the puck past them isn't at all as easy as what it sounds, as each intelligent 'keeper closes down attacking moves, and plucks flying pucks out of the air with simple ease.

GT's first attempt at an ice hockey game is a welcome 'no-brainer' which contains all the fervour of the real thing, but without any of the demanding rules. As with

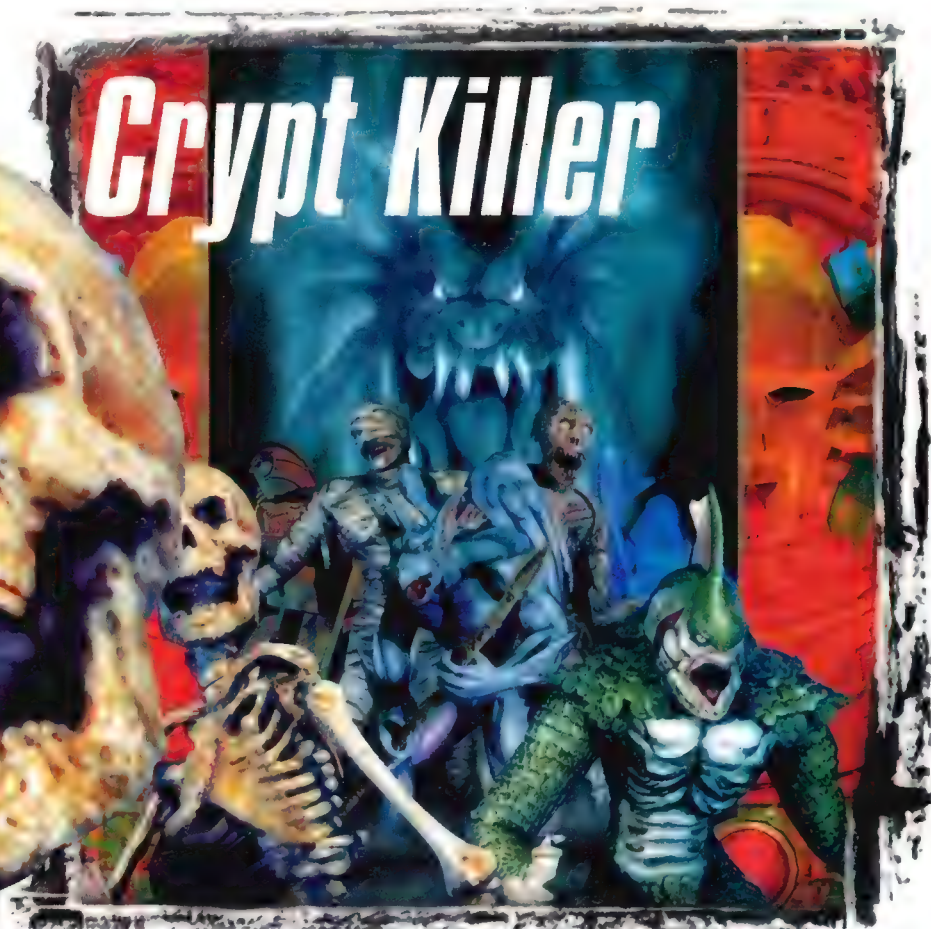
MAN OF THE MATCH

If a player proves particularly heroic during the course of one of the game's three periods, the number of goals, successful tackles and general level of skill displayed is totted up at the end of the period. All four players are then shown on screen with number beside the relevant skills, and the highest-scoring is duly rewarded with a glittery effect over their portrait, with the ultimate aim to be declared 'Man of the Match' by retaining the effect throughout the game. In order to maximise the user's chances, a number of teams are available, ranging from Colorado to Florida, and the Vancouver team. However, while one of the pair offered in the team will be generally a good all-rounder of certainly very adept in one area, his partner is likely to be a bit on the weedy side, although they do tend to make up for the good player's one major deficiency. However, by leaving the CPU in charge of the weaker player, the glory shots and last-ditch goals are the user's for the taking...



NBA Jam, Midway have actually managed to cram all the rules of a sport into a game which is relatively simple to pick up, and best enjoyed with a handful of mates. *NHL Open Ice* will be skating on to the PlayStation ice rink sometime during March.

ALTHOUGH THE CONVERSION IS LIGHT GUN COMPATIBLE, THE NOVELTY OF THE COIN-OP'S PUMP ACTION SHOTGUNS ARE SORELY MISSED.



With the banning of hand-guns currently causing a stir across the nation, *Crypt Killer* is the sort of game likely to encourage public outrage. Like *Doom* and *Mortal Kombat* before it, the release of Konami's frag-fest is likely to be accompanied by moral disgust, probably from both parents and politicians alike, but why? Surely *Crypt Killer* wouldn't provoke someone to rush out on a mindless killing spree, especially when the game has all the realism of an episode of *EastEnders*.

Even the Konami HyperBlaster light gun, which is released in this country this spring, isn't particularly intimidating. After all, the chances of holding up a bank with a day-glo green pistol are rather slim, and there's certainly even less chance of causing physical injury with such a weapon.

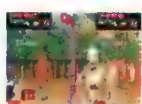
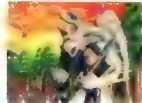
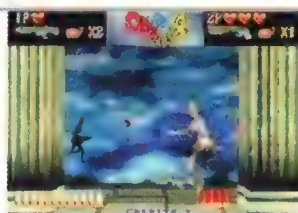
Still, the pleas for a ban are bound to surface, considering the politically incorrect



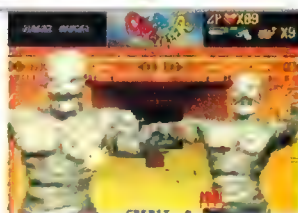
nature of the game. Conceptually it's very simple, with one or two players taking aim with their weapons and wading through countless waves of undead enemies, bagging the bad guys amid a shower of blood and guts. Add to this a spattering of gore and intestinal trails and you have a game that's thin on thought but extremely ammo hungry. Better still, you're armed with a pump-action shotgun, so who cares that the grey matter is on standby providing the trigger finger is itching to go...

Living Room

Even though *Crypt Killer* is an extremely straightforward



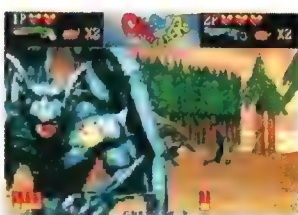
game with little need for storyline, there is a plot that runs throughout Konami's vicious blood bath. However, it's as unsavoury as the gameplay itself and focuses on two blokes who dare to

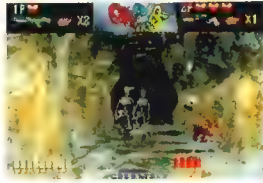


venture inside one of six haunted tombs. Unlike most video games the player doesn't assume the role of a hero out to save the human race, but instead is a mercenary who is in this purely for their



Release: MARCH
Company: KONAMI
Price: TBA
Players: 1-2
Genre: SHOOT 'EM UP





own gain. Quite simply they couldn't care less if us mere mortals were consumed alive by the living dead as long as they get to the jewels and priceless stones that are hidden deep within each crypt.

And this is where the game begins, choosing between six different levels that hide treasures of varying wealth. Reloading the shotgun and stepping inside the first haunted cave, the aim is to bag everything in sight. Considering pretty much every target is dead already (or at least undead) it's not that challenging, and is done by pointing either the on-screen cursor or light gun and unleashing a chamber full of shells. While the HyperBlaster is the most interesting to use especially when there are two players waving plastic guns around at the same time, the mouse can also be used, as can the joypad, although the level of accuracy and speed is unlikely to be as good. A joypad doesn't look as cool as a light gun either, but even the HyperBlaster feels weedy compared to the plastic shotguns featured in the original arcade version of the game.

SHOTGUN SENSATION

Yep, *Crypt Killer* is a faithful conversion of the successful coin-op original, although

during the translation the game has undergone a couple of minor changes. For starters, the number of mercenaries has been reduced from three to two and there are no pump-action shotguns to play around with either, although they do feature in the game itself. In fact the shotgun is the basic weapon, and easily rips through pretty much any monster that shambles towards the screen. It holds just five shells though, and must be reloaded constantly by aiming off the screen and firing. Other weapons hold more ammunition, like the gatling gun that appears later in the game for example.

These extra weapons and other bonuses are found by either blasting open the crates and treasure chests that are scattered throughout each location, or are occasionally left behind by a dispatched enemy. The high-powered shotgun is basically just a meatier version of the standard issue weapon, while the gatling gun fires a rapid stream of bullets that is effective both against hordes of undead enemies or against the tougher level guardians. There's also a rocket



THE DIGITISED SPRITES ARE SLIGHTLY LOWER RESOLUTION THAN THEIR ARCADE COUNTERPARTS, BUT EXPLODE JUST AS WELL.

launcher which may be limited to five shots but is in practice particularly devastating. In addition to the primary weapon there are also grenades to pick up. When fired they wound any enemy in sight, but because they appear in strictly limited numbers they are best saved for the larger monsters, such as the scary boss characters.

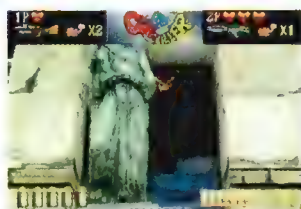
Indeed, in classic shoot 'em up style *Crypt Killer* has huge guardians that trundle on screen and present the final challenge before the player can exit a stage.

Varied in both shape and size,

guardians attack with surprising aggressiveness, bombarding two mercenaries in a hail of blows that can only be blocked by shooting them as they fly towards the screen.

AND THEN THERE WERE TWO...

Battling the undead army proves easier in two-player mode, as one gamer can concentrate on the incoming fire while the other fires at the staggering zombies themselves. Logically damage is halved too, because the screen is divided down the centre and any hits are allocated depending on which side the attack was made. Therefore you don't have to worry about enemies that pop up on the other side of the screen, although it's always good to help out a battle buddy who's struggling against half a dozen zombies. Then again, it's just as beneficial to leave them for dead and grab all the bonuses for yourself!



TURN LEFT AT THE FRIGTS

Unlike a lot of gun games, *Crypt Killer* isn't a linear romp that drags the player from one place to another. Instead the two psychos get to choose between six levels which divide as the game progresses. Having fought through the pyramids for example, the mercenaries are then confronted by a mysterious Oracle who gives them a choice of paths. Deciding to turn either left or right, the players have limited control over the direction of the game, choosing where to go next and which enemies to fight. This not only increases variety, it also adds a certain amount of replay value to what could otherwise be an extremely limited game.

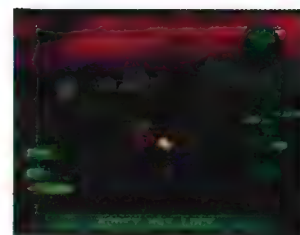
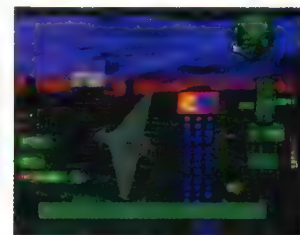
Each level has its own visual style, with monsters that fit in with the background locations accordingly. The tree-filled forest is packed with zombies that emerge from the ground and bats that swoop from above, while the pyramids are haunted by hieroglyphic warriors that sprout from the walls and attack. There's even an underwater stage, but surely the ammo cartridges would get water-logged which would render them useless?

Independence Day

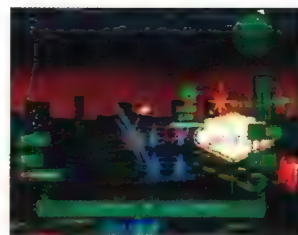
game throws wave after wave of the smaller enemy scout ships into attack, as the player assumes the role of one of Will Smith's merry men and engages the multi-tentacled beasts in a fight for the Earth's existence.

TAKING A COOL LOOK AT EARTH

If anything, the *Independence Day* game expands upon the alien invasions seen in the film. In the film, the extent of the alien invasion is shown with cutaway sequences of the huge motherships overshadowing famous landmarks, such as the Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty, and the Pyramids. The game, however, expands upon the invasion considerably, setting each of the dog-fight-based missions in the countries featured. Starting in an FA-18, the player begins the game whizzing around the 3D cities, attempting to blow the alien armadas from the skies. The gameplay is akin to that of Sega's hoary old *Afterburner* coin-op, with the player's plane viewed in the third person with the alien scouts bobbing around on the horizon. The missions have been broken down into an episodic format, with the preliminary waves given to targeting and destroying a



hollywood is a strange place. This time last year, Dean Devlin and Roland Emmerich were on the cusp of fame as their first major league collaboration, *Stargate*, was faring moderately well at the box office. As Kurt Russell and James Spader were exploring the pairs' Egypt-based alternative dimension, though, Devlin and Emmerich were already busy on what would become the most successful film of all time, beating even Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* in terms of first



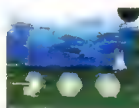
weekend success. *Independence Day* followed the *Jurassic Park* formula of pumping money into the special effects rather than top-grade stars, and consequently, although the film boasted the likes of Will Smith, Jeff Goldblum, Brent Spiner, Bill Pullman, and Randy Quaid in its cast, the stars of the show were the alien invaders and the CGI effects that were used to bring them to life.

With the film set to debut

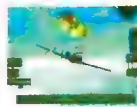
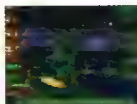
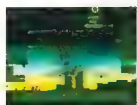
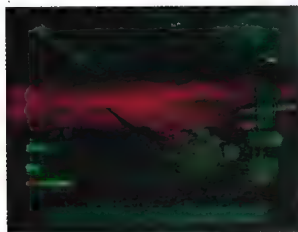
on video in February, Fox Interactive's video game interpretation of the 'Earth Vs the Flying Saucers' basis takes the form of a 3D shoot 'em up, similar in appearance to JVC's forthcoming *Deadly Skies*. The plot follows that of the film fairly closely with the Earth surrounded by alien motherships which are systematically wiping out key cities with their huge lasers. These huge ships seem impervious to attack, and the

predetermined number of scout ships. Although the player is treated to an external view of their plane as it banks and dives, the essential HUD displays are scattered around the edge of the screen. The most important of these is a radar which gives a rough outline of the city and pinpoints the alien craft as small glowing dots. Using this to locate the enemy positions, up to eight scouts need to be destroyed

Release : MARCH '97
Company : FOX INTERACTIVE
Price : £44.95
Players : 1-2
Genre : SHOOT 'EM UP



THE BATTLE FOR THE EARTH'S FUTURE TAKES PLACE OVER SOME OF THE PLANET'S MOST RECOGNISABLE LANDMARKS.



before an assault on the 'City Destroyers' begins.

TURNING THE TABLES

The battle against the City Destroyer ships is probably the closest to the film that the game gets. The battles are extremely reminiscent of the scenes where Will Smith and his gung-ho gang find they cannot breach the craft's force field. Rather than add a virus to the alien computers, however, the game's alien craft are indeed perceptible to attack, with the player completing a number of circuits to blow away the gun

Interactive have played up this cliché to the Nth degree. Washington acts as the first stage, with the White House under siege, before the game moves on to Moscow, Cape Canaveral, the Russian submarine base at Nakoda, and eventually towards Area 51 — the rumoured location of several crashed alien craft. And the home to a few more, when the level has been completed.

Each level is given a strict time-limit, which is dictated by the amount of time it takes the alien Destroyers to charge up their powerful lasers, and although the play-

than ever, with the missiles automatically locked-on if the player keeps the alien within their sights for a few seconds, and the aliens eventually bursting into a familiar-looking explosion after sufficient direct hits.

Thankfully, as the aliens grow wise to the players methods, more powerful planes are made available by the grateful Earth governments (see panel).

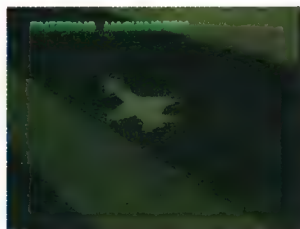
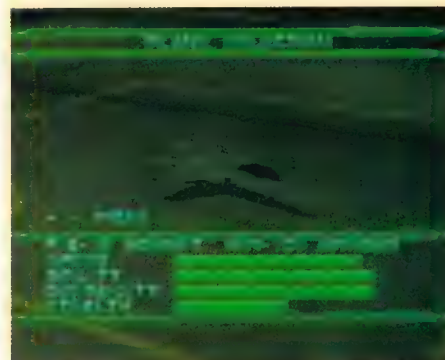
TURNING THE TABLES

It would be very fair to call *Independence Day* an — ahem — traditional shoot 'em up. It follows the majority of existing blasting rules, and this includes the 'Boss' levels which act as the end to each country's conflict. Basically, this section repeats the movie's climax a dozen times over, with the player enter-

TAKE COMMAND

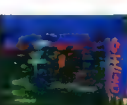
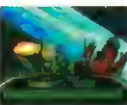
As the game's difficulty level kicks in, mankind's survival mission needs a slight leg up. The FA-18 which acts as the default plane can be replaced with more advanced models which are made available between each level. The new craft tie in with Earth's fight back against the alien, and the longer the player can keep the aliens at bay, the more work the survivors can put into piecing together even better planes. Thus, when the FA-18 is no longer enough to keep up with the incredibly manoeuvrable alien scouts, EF2000s and MiG-31s offer better firepower and considerably more control and speed.

THE LONGER EARTH SURVIVES BECAUSE OF YOUR CONTINUOUS REBELLION, THE MORE POWERFUL THE PLANES UNDER YOUR CONTROL BECOME.



turrets and alien scouts which whizz around below before finally locating a weak point which sends the saucer crashing to Earth. One down, eleven to go. In all, *Independence Day* features twelve stricken cities, each instantly recognisable by the famous landmarks. One of the more predictable elements of the film was that it was inevitable there would be a saucer above, say, Big Ben at some point, and Fox

er's planes are the best the US military has to offer, the alien saucers are capable of gravity-defying moves which make them incredibly hard to down. The FA-18 the player begins the game with is armed with an infinite supply of bullets and missiles, with the alien ships fairly resilient to the former, and requiring a couple of direct hits from 'Locked-On' missiles. Here, the similarities to *Afterburner* becoming more pronounced



ing the labyrinthian innards of the huge Motherships which spewed the City Destroyers and their scouts into Earth's atmosphere. Once inside, the player is left to take out the remaining scouts which patrol its inner workings, and finally take out the central core and get out before it collapses in on itself. This is the area where the game separates itself from the film, with the craft's reactor rather reminiscent of the exhaust port sequence in the Star Wars films and games.

Still, if saving Earth isn't to your liking, respite can be found in the shape of the game's two-player modes. The first is a split-screen effort, with one participant representing Earth and the other the tentacled invaders, while a Link cable can also be used to the same effect, but with both players benefiting from a full screen environment. *Independence Day* is ready to invade our PlayStations in March, shortly after the video's sell-thru release on February 14th.

Solved

Welcome to the second part of our extensive guide to BMG's *Pandemonium*. To keep you all working we haven't included the bonus levels but all other bases are covered. Good luck...

Pandemonium!

LEVEL 10—CANPOY VILLAGE

Bounce to the right off the Buzzes for a Fireball and a key then bounce along a line of Buzzes and drop to the roof below, go left. Now jump from web to web then return to the right, run to the top of the bridge and jump off the Buzz steering to the coins, then up along the

bridge and forward to Checkpoint 1.

Jump the webs, bouncing off the higher one to land on

a small ledge to collect a heart then jump back to the main path and go to the right. Jump from the end of the path and bounce across the Buzz, collect the coins and drop to the lower path, now go left and through the door and onto the swinging ledges. Go back to the right, through the door and walk to the end of the path and jump up the leaves. Once you have jumped past the third of the leaf jumps you will reach an area with some crates, they all have coins inside. Smash the crates, and using all the bouncy webs work your way down to collect them, the lowest crate will take you to Checkpoint 2.

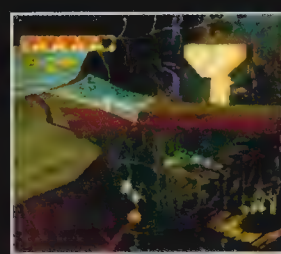
Go down the path and through the magic gate, you are now a turtle (If you press down you can now hide in your shell). Get the coins from the bridge and then, using the floating web bounce to the ledge on the right.



Kill the Blow Goon and take the key, walk left and drop down a column of coins. There is a key on the far left of the bridge, drop down and take it and go through the gap. Now grab the coins, the key and the heart then bounce right under the wood braces to get the double coin. Now drop down through the gap into the next area, get all the coins and drop to the ground, take the key and drop to hit Checkpoint 3.

Bounce across to the hut on the right, onto the roof and then from the skinny branch to the Buzz to the purple coin. Walk onto the branch in the middle of the ledge which will collapse and drop you down to a long row of coins, follow this path of coins so as to avoid the spikes, you hit several Buzzes on the way down too. When you get to the bottom drop down and walk right through the magic gate, back in form slide down the tunnel the Checkpoint 4.

Jump off the spinning barrels and off the Buzz on the left, kill the snail and take the Ankh that appears. Go right and into the door, use the web and kill the Blow Goon, take the fireball and bounce up left, kill the next Goon and take the Shrink Ray power-



up. Now jump left and drop down to land on a ledge. Drop down again and enter the door which will return you to the web. Bounce up and past the hut then run left across the bridge to get the coins. The go back to the next hut and take the heart, then stand at the end of the path and onto the swinging platform, now jump right across two webs and a barrel to a hut, then jump right across the traps form more coins. For more coins drop to the ground and turn left, using the webs to bounce up. Once you have got them all go to the right and use the diagonal web to bounce right. Run through the hut then quickly jump up the branches. Take the Fireball power-up and run to Checkpoint 5.

Kill the Blow Goon and jump up the steps (you won't set off the trap if you land on the far right side of each step). Next, jump up the huts grabbing the coins and then drop to the bottom. Run across the ledges as they collapse behind you the jump from the huts to the right and onto three spinning barrels, jump from the third barrel and to the exit.

LEVEL 11 – SOLDIER BARRACKS

Go to the right along the water slide then jump from the end of the slide steering hard to the right to land on a ledge. Now go to the right and open the two crates, carry on walking right and collect the coins then using the trampoline saws, bounce up to a ledge with a heart, bounce up to the highest saws and to Checkpoint 1.

Now go down the slide and steer hard to the right, bounce off two Buzzes and after grabbing the heart steer left to land on the path. Walk left to the water slide, take the coins and jump back immediately onto the path. Now walk right and drop to the next path bump the Goon off and jump to the right, go left when you land and up the waterfall, then go right and grab the heart, past the log pile and into a different area. Collect all the coins and walk through the door to Checkpoint 2.

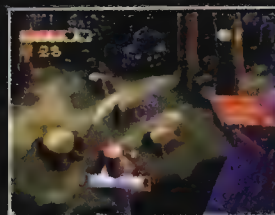
Run right, kill the Goon and open the crate. Go right again and make a jump to get the line of coins then drop to the lower path, while you're

here, take the key to open the door, jump to the crates and collect coins, a Fireball and Double coin then run left to drop to the ledge below, bounce left off the saw towards the hut then go to the other crate on the right. Bounce up the saws and kill the Goon then take the key which lowers the bridge, run across to Checkpoint 3.

Go right and jump to the ledge, roll the circular stump to the right and grab the heart under the ledge, continue pushing until you reach the hut then jump onto it for more coins, now go right and open a crate, double back to the left and jump from the stump to the hut to the ledge. Next, bounce across the Buzz to another coin crate, go back to the left, jump past the buzzsaw to the bouncy saw, leap up and onto the path then run right along the collapsing bridges jumping the buzzsaw as you go. Now run on the rolling stump to the right grabbing coins as you go, walk to another stump and roll it to the next ledge, now jump left and take the coins on the ledge. Go right once again and jump from the stump to the Goon.

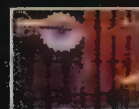
Bounce upwards after using the saw and take each key as it appears, the final ledge has a bouncing saw, coins and a heart, after taking them drop to the right landing on the hut and then go right and jump from the rolling stump to the Goon ledge, roll the stump all the way to the right and then jump to the Blow Goon and take the key to reveal a bouncing saw. Now jump up the ledges taking the key at the top which will reveal two more ledges, jump up and run to the right then drop down the chute to Checkpoint 4.

Bounce off the Buzzes to reach the higher ledge, run right collecting the coins as you go then jump to the left to collect even more then return to the right. Continue going to the right and break the crate which is between the Buzzsaws then slide down to a giant conveyor belt. Next, jump to the ledge and walk right dropping the bouncing saw, this will bounce you up to a second and a third saw leading you to a coin crate. Now jump right and drop to a ledge with more coins and a heart then you can bounce a high left for



the red coin. Keep on going higher and you will reach a ledge with a sign pointing to the right, a wooden board will appear which, if you jump on it it will take you to Checkpoint 5.

Go over the log piles and into another area with conveyor belts, jump from the left-hand conveyor to the small pink ledge on the right, go up two ledges, kill the Blow Goon then jump up and then left towards the bouncing saw where you can leap to a ledge with a heart. Now drop off the ledge onto a moving wooden plank which will go to the right and jump on a ledge. Wait for another plank and ride it to a bouncing saw, leap to a ledge then take another plank to another one, grab the coins and hide yet another plank to the exit.



LEVEL 12 – HONCO'S LOGMILL

Kill the Goon on the right and jump onto the conveyor belt, take the fireball and leap from the belt to the Buzz and bouncy saws. Now jump to the right, bounce past the Buzz to the crate then jump right and down the column of coins. Go left here where you will find two crates then go back to the right to another crate, continue right and bounce off the saw to collect the coins and heart then climb the stairs. Run when the Buzzsaws are apart, breaking open the crate. Then go right and onto the conveyor belt (mind the overhead Buzzsaws). Continue right until you reach an arrow of coins pointing downwards which will take you to Checkpoint 1.

So that you aren't pushed into the Buzzsaws run to the right as soon as you land, continue running right and when you reach it, jump from the belt to grab the arch of coins then take the red coin and duck as

you get on the next belt, use the saw to get to the higher belt then go left. Carry on running left, bounce off the Goon for more coins, grab more coins from in the traps and go left up the stairs, then move to the left through the buzzsaws. Next, bounce off the Buzz to the higher path and continue left. After opening all the crates drop to the lower path and through the blades. Before getting on the belt wait for the buzzsaw to rise, jump left over the buzzsaw to the next belt then run left and over another blade. Now go left, killing the two Goons (watch out for the buzzsaws). Continue left over the saw and jump the ledge with a heart then walk right down to Checkpoint 2.

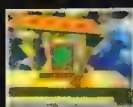
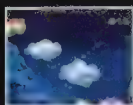
Go though the magic gate and become a turtle once again, going right you will pass three buzzsaws at the end, bounce off the saw to the high ledge. Bounce left along the Buzzes and go through the up/down blades again, this time go to the

right and pounce on the Goon, go left, take the key and after taking the coin arrow, walk right. Now bounce off the Buzz and Blow Goon straight to a purple coin, drop back to the path and go right, bounce off the Blow Goon and go to the right. Drop to the main path and kill the Goon, take the key and go into the tunnel for more coins, turn back and go right, opening coin crates as you go. Now return to the left and jump up the rope ledges. You now walk past four buzzsaws and onto a rope ledge which moves upwards slowly, collect the coins near the saws without being caught (press down to protect yourself). Once at the top bounce up and left to a crate, grab the moolah and go back down and right to a rope ledge. Ride it upward through more blades and coins, now run right at the top and through the magical gate to reach the exit.

BOSS 2 – GOON HONCHO



Run to the left and keep running left throughout the duration of the battle, you come across three buzzsaws that circle the ring, jump each saw as you get to it. There is a switch and a balloon on the ring; as you run past the switch it sends a fiery platform across to the balloon, which is inflated by the hot air. Keep running left until you reach the balloon, then jump off it to catch some air, steer towards the Goon Honcho and hit him on the nose, now run to the left, use this pattern throughout the battle, but after you have hit the Honcho twice he starts to run around, and runs faster each time you hit him. So when he gets close to you, run under his feet to avoid him hammering you, wait for him to turn then run to the right, then run left. Keep repeating this method to keep Honcho away from you, and after five knocks to the nose he should be out cold.



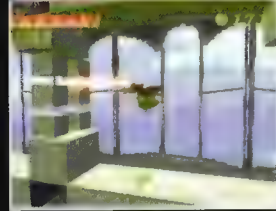
LEVEL 13 – HONCHO'S AIRSHIP

Begin by climbing down the ladder and then go right, along the pathway and out to the top of the Airship, jump left grabbing the coins and into the cannon, aim (using left or right) to the right (twice) and press the fire button to land on top of the furnace taking the coin, then go back to the cannon, this time firing to the left (twice) reaching the door. Go through the door and

left onto a path, kill the Goon and then jump to the higher ledge for more coins, double back and onto the lower path by the ladder, through the door on the right and back outside where you started. Get back into the cannon and press left once which will shoot you up to a high ledge and up to a coin circle, then you can do the same again but to the right for more coins. You can now aim left twice

and fire yourself into the blue dome, taking the key from inside and using the cannon again aim left once to the top of the dome for the shield power-up, then run to the right dropping in front of the furnace where you can now run through as you are invincible. You will shoot up in the airship and find plenty of coins to collect, there is one gold rimmed heart at the very top. Once collected, drop to

the bottom of the balloon, steering right onto a cannon ledge. Shoot up for coins and right again to the next ledge below. Shot back up twice to the balloon and walk left dropping to the ledge where you find a coin and Goon, then running right take a huge jump to land on the front of the Airship to collect coins, then return left and jump to land on the back of the furnace.



LEVEL 14 – DRAGON SKYFORT

Start by running right, and jump to bounce up the clouds to the right hand pink block, take coins and continue to the right and jump onto the platform which will start to move, then jump to the solid ledge and to the pink ledges for coins. Now walk and drop to the lower ledge, running to the right and over two blade blossoms, kill the flying fish (which will have followed you) and return to the left, up the clouds and onto the solid ledge on the right. Enter the cannon and straight up for coins, then jump from the left of the ring and across the clouds to another cannon. Once again, shoot straight up for more coins, watching out for the flying fish, jump right and right again onto a balloon which will rise, then cross over two more balloons and onto a ledge. Enter the cannon and jump right to a ledge with bouncy

clouds. Run right round the rocket launcher, minding out for the rockets from each hole and when you reach the right side jump onto the track platform which will take you all the way to the right. Now drop down onto a hovering platform and down again onto the clouds and gather as many coins and the heart then back up, right and through the door to checkpoint 1.

From here, go right and onto the moving platform which will take you to the right, mind the balloon bomb. Drop down top the lower path and left over the obstacles, following the sign down the net. Jump off the net for a Freeze Ray, then

walk onto another moving platform, drop down onto the cloud and walk left to collect coins. Next, return to the clouds and bounce up to the right up to the balloon, ride the balloon up to the hovering ledge, grab the coin and return to the balloon which will take you up to more bouncy clouds. Jump all the way up the clouds, bounce left off the buzz to a heart and drop to take a coin. Once again, go right and to the second bouncy cloud and fall onto a hovering ledge, walk left and drop to the path. Once on the path, go right and jump to the moving platform which will take you to the right (mind the rockets). You can drop to the ledge below to take the heart to the left, but do not fall off! Then return to the right, using the cloud to jump up then bounce up the buzzes to the coins at the top of the stairs. Go right at the top and jump onto the platform above the blade blossoms, then through the door to checkpoint 2.

Once through the gate you will become a dragon again so fly straight upwards, go right at the top for some coins and then go left and push up along the roof to move it, you can then fly into the passage and to the right for coins, then follow the tunnel down and left, once all the coins have been taken the floor will slide back. Now fly straight down and into the next passage, turn right at the bottom

and take the coin arrow to open the wall. Fly straight up for more goodies and then down again and to the right then to the left searching for coins. No fly up and right where the walls will open, through the gate and you're human again. Walk onto the balloon which will take you up but jump to the left before the balloon disappears, landing on a ledge. Take all the coins, walk right and drop down back to the gate. Now go through the door to checkpoint 3.

Duck as the rocket zooms past, on the far right jump left along the clouds to reach the coins, bounce along the clouds and to the next ledge then up the clouds for treasures at the top. Now drop down to the path and walk right to the moving platform. Jump off the platform and up the clouds to another moving platform which takes you upwards. As you reach the rocket launcher jump right to two ledges, dropping to the lower one for a heart, then jump to the left ledge and wait for the platform. Now take the platform all the way, run right and bounce off the cloud to a balloon. This will float upwards and once at the top jump to the clouds, bouncing right across them to a moving platform, ride this to the far right and jump onto the floating balloon which will carry you to the exit.



You can then drop straight down into the hole to the hull of the Airship and shoot out of the large cannon to checkpoint 1.

Jump over the blade blossoms to the right, over the fire and along the path (avoid the rockets) take the heart at the top of the path and continue to the right. Then drop into the cannon, aim right once and fire yourself in the air, steering left to land next to



another cannon, get in and shoot out straight to the coin circle, drop back in the cannon and steer to the right to land on the path. Now run to the next cannon, aim left once and fire yourself up to another cannon, now aim right twice and fire, steering right to land on another path. Take the key by going to the right and return left to a coin circle, then go right once again collecting coins. To reach the coin on the roof go back down to the cannon and shoot upwards then bounce across the other roofs using the buzzes. Continue forward once back on the path, through the balloons to reach another cannon, fire upwards to a ledge and jump right

onto the roof and underneath to reach the Fireball power-up, then go right shooting balloons and Walkapede. Use the cannon to shoot up to the roof, bounce right and onto the final roof, then right and through the doors to checkpoint 2.

Once though the gate you will become a dragon, fly to the right and up to the left and smash through the wall using a fireball and collect a red coin, return right and down frying balloons and collecting coins as you go, move high and low to ensure you don't miss anything. When you reach two more balloon spitters take the key from above the left-hand one, then down and above the centre

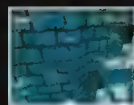
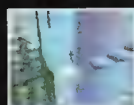
spitter and back down again, then go right up and into the third tunnel and fly to the left, going down to collect coins. Continue to the left and smash through the wall with a fireball, take the coins and smash through the next wall, fly up to the right-hand alcove, take the key and fly left to take the Ankh. Next, blast through three walls to the right into a room, collect the coins. Then fly right to more coin circles, grabbing the coins as you fly down left. Once at the bottom fly left and though a door, grab as many coins as you can, avoiding the rockets then walk left to the end and fly upwards, go right and to the exit.

LEVEL 15 - CLOUD CITADEL

Jump along to the bouncy clouds and bounce up them to the left for some coins then drop down to the left. Walk into the gust which will blow you upwards, go right and bounce off the cloud to the stairs. Once at the top drop straight down where the gust will blow you through some coins, then go right and up two clouds; from the second one, drop down and the gust will blow you to the left. Keep jumping into this gust to grab all of the coins. Then return to the bouncy clouds and all the way up, where you can jump onto a ledge on the left for some coins. Return to the right and jump to a ledge which will move down to a path. Walk right and take the key which lowers the wall, bounce across and walk to the cannon, shoot straight up and onto a moving ledge. Move onto the next ledge which lowers to another cannon but before you use it a gust will push you left to get some coins. You can then return to the cannon and shoot straight up to another ledge. Get into a third cannon and aim right once, before firing, wait for a rainbow and bounce across it to the right. A platform will take you to the top of the Citadel. Now run right and jump into the cannon, aim right once and steer to the left as you fall. Go right and to the next can-

non, shoot up and through the door to checkpoint 1.

Run right avoiding the small tornado, bounce across the buzzes to the right and take the Shrink Ray, then shoot the tornado. Continue to the right. Jump from the end of the path and wait by the door then drop to the ground and walk outside, into the cannon and shoot left then back again and shoot right, steer left as you fall to land on the floating ledge then jump right to a solid ledge and continue right until you reach two bouncy clouds and another tornado. Jump off the clouds for some coins landing next to a door on your right, walk through the door and to the right until you reach a bumper then double back outside again. Drop down to the clouds and then leap up to the ledge on the left, then jumping left collect the coins on each of the moving ledges until you reach a cannon, shoot up to the coins and then walk left and though the door. Now jump over the tornado and to the bumper, over to another bumper, grab the coins then push it from the left which will drop you into an small area with loads of coins to collect, get them all then drop through a hole to get back to the bumper. From here, go to the right, past the tornado and through the door, shoot out of the cannon over the fire and to checkpoint 2.



Shoot out of the cannon to the cloud on the left, bouncing across the buzzes for a Freeze Ray then walk right, jumping over the rockets for the coins, then jump onto the track platform to the left which will carry you to checkpoint 3.

Now go right and along the ledges, drop left to a path when you see the sign and walk left, you can bounce of the bumper to collect coins inside a pipe and then go left to collect from the other two pipes. Take the coins and the key which will melt the ice wall, walk right and take another key and bounce to the top for another key, then walk right and though the gate, dropping down to the ledge. From here, walk into the gust of wind to blow back to the clouds, but fall back down and keep going right along the bottom for more coins and a heart. Jump left along the clouds and return to the right until you reach a ledge with a tornado. Now climb

the ladder and drop through the ring. Get to the bouncy cloud on the far right and use a gust back up to the first ring, jump across some rising balloons and into the teleporter. You are now in a new location so walk to the right and bounce off the flying fish and down to the left on the clouds, then drop down again to the long line of coins. From here, drop down again and go through the door. You are now back at the teleporter, so repeat the last few direction but this time jumping to the right along the ledges and clouds. Use the next teleporter, over the blade blossoms and onto the cloud to collect coins and a Fireball. Shoot the two tornados and take the treasures and then go into the teleporter. Wait for a rainbow to appear and bounce with it to the right, now jump onto the cloud, go right and into the last teleporter, walking to the exit.





LEVEL 16 – EFREET PALACE

Jump from the steps to the cloud, steering left into the keyhole shaped window, grab all the coins and return through the window to the path. Now bounce from the cloud to the coins and into the wind gust, follow the gust and grab the coins, at the end go right and across the spikes via the moving platform. Jump onto the platform which carries you upwards. Next, run to the right into another gust, grab as many coins as you can, once in the new area continue to grab coins using the wind gusts. Then work with the two vertical gusts to get more coins above the spikes then steer between the gusts to land on the ground. When you have all

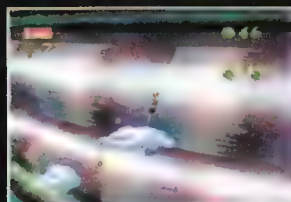
the coins jump into the right side gust and blow up into the next tunnel. Try to run against the gust to collect coins and the key and drop down to the lower right corner for a second key (you should collect all the keys in the higher tunnel before you take this second key), then jump up and through a door on the right. Walk into the first set of wind gusts, blowing you up and down until you have plenty of height to enable you to steer left and reach a coin on a ledge, continue to the right collecting the coins as you go by using the gusts until you reach a solid ledge. Ride across the spikes and take the shield power up then slide down the ledge grabbing coins as

you go. Continue running right to checkpoint 1.

You are now in a circular room and you are constantly blown around to the right, use the clouds to collect coins and hit the high switch on the wall to create more coins. Also, collect a series of keys to open the door, then hit the lower switch to leave the room, jumping through the wind gust to hit checkpoint 2.

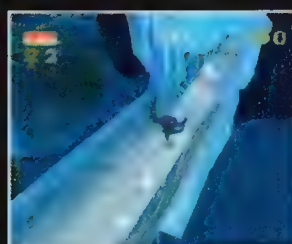
Steer right as you fall and climb the ladder then jump off the Ratbat to collect any remaining coins. Then go down the ladder and jump right onto the roof to take the key. Go below the roof and use the bumper to smash through and grab the coins, then right up the stairs and into the tornado to fly up to a coin circle. Now go up the stairs into a second tornado which takes you up to a cannon, aim left twice to shoot you out to some coins then return to the cannon and aim right twice to land on a roof. Jump across the rainbows for

more coins then drop onto the left side of the cannon to the Shrink Ray, shoot the tornado and jump onto the roof to collect more goodies and then go back to the cannon, shoot up and right to a ledge and bounce to the right, blasting balloons as you go. Now use another cannon to reach some higher coins, drop down to the door where you will find coins inside then shoot out of the cannon for more coins in the air. Use the cannon again and fire up to the roof, drop off the left side and walk through the door. Once at the new path, drop down to the door and go right, into the next door and drop down to another path. Now walk left and shoot out of the cannon for more coins then walk right jumping to grab coins as you drop. A huge gust will carry you along, grab all the coins you can then steer to the right to land in the doorway and go right to reach the exit.



LEVEL 17 – FROZEN CAVERN

Ride the slide into the Cavern and blast through the green ice and through more ice with the Fireball you collected on the way down, then jump off the right-hand bumper for some coins and bounce to the right and onto the path. Now run left, jumping into the crevice, bounce off the Walkapede and go left to hit the bumper which will push you to the left. Bounce off the tornado on the far left to float upwards for coins then jump on the right-hand ledge. From here, go right and take the goodies above the bumper, shoot the green ice and tornados to the right, take the shield and go down the



slope. Destroy as many balloons as you can and collect all the coins (there is a Fireball at the top of the room if you need it), blast through the ice to get the key then go right into the tunnel to hit checkpoint 1.

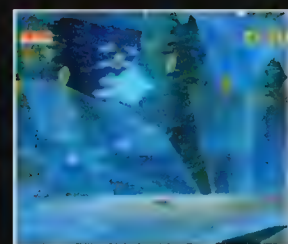
Once again, shoot the green ice and jump as you hit the bumper which will allow you to gather all the coins, go



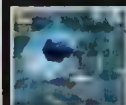
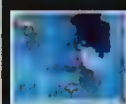
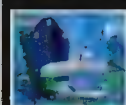
right and into the gust grabbing coins and shooting balloons then into the next gust and the next collecting as you go. Now drop to the right, turn left, shoot the green ice and get the circle of coins then you can run to the right and drop to checkpoint 2.

Walk through the gate and you become a dragon, go to the left, shooting the balloons as you collect coins. Fly down until you reach a wall of green ice, shoot it and take whatever you find behind it, there are two more of these on your way down. Once at the bottom, go left and through another magic gate, then run off the ledge to checkpoint 3.

Go right along the ground, blast the green ice and take the coin circle then go back up to the bumpers and grab the red coins that you see



then drop back to the gust onto the lower-right ledge, smash through the green ice and hit the bumper aiming for the Heart and Freeze Ray above. Now jump into the gust on the right and blow over to a ledge, then across two more gusts to a path. Run right down the slope, jumping up to reach the coins. You'll reach a bumper at the end so bounce up through the gusts to the left hand ledge, hit the yellow bumper, then the green one to fly up to the next ledge. From here, go through the highest gust of wind and run down the hill for an Ank and coins, then go back to the highest gust and slide to the right for coins. Keep going until you reach the exit.

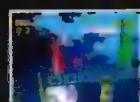
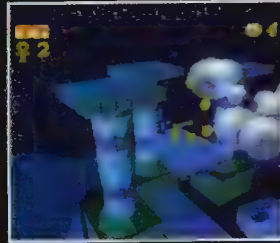
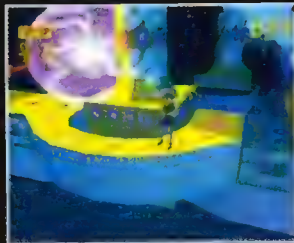
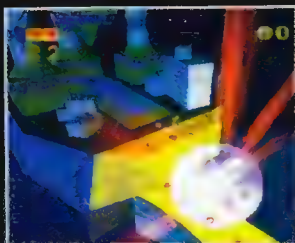


LEVEL 18 — STORM TEMPLE

Walk to the right and off the ledge, falling will start the lightning ball moving, follow the ball to a small booth (use this booth to escape the electric balls) then quickly run to the right and into a green light beam which floats you upwards, steer left to land on a ledge. From here, jump along the long series of clouds and grab the key at the end then return to the right and to the door, take a second key and go through the door to checkpoint 1.

Now run forward into the light beam and over the lightning ball then wait for the ball to move. Grab the fireball and fly up to the next ledge breaking through the ice and taking the coins. Jump up the green beam and fly all the way to the top steering left just a little and then shoot the ice on the roof. Then fly up the beam once more to grab the heart which was in the ice. Now go to the left and though some ice to another beam, and then through more ice to a third beam, from here fly to the right and through the collapsing pillars to checkpoint 2.

Jump onto the first flat cloud and drop down to another cloud with a Shrink Ray then jump to the right and across more clouds, shooting monsters as you go. Now go through a series of falling pillars, hit the switch next to the coins to turn on a light and also freezing the monsters. You can then jump up the beam to the flat clouds and up the clouds to a ledge at the top. Take the coins, key and shield and jump right onto another clouds with goodies then jump down to the ground. From here, run right to the door, grab the

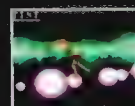
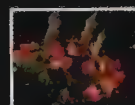


key and then return to the left running from the lightning ball, now run left and up the pillar and right onto the roof. Wait for the ball to move and go through the door to checkpoint 3.

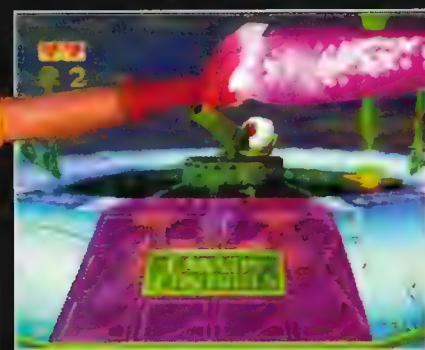
Hit the switch on the right and bounce off the bumper to the Fireball spiral above, then slide down the slope hitting the switch at the bottom, go to the right for some coins and then return to the left, jump above the light and bounce off the bumper then across the ledges to a path, going right to hit the next switch. Continue to the right and drop into the hole underneath the small lightning ball for a few coins, then bounce up, above the ball and go to the right for a heart. Return to the left, hit the switch and across the moving ledges. Once at the top fall straight down, grabbing coins as you go. Go down the slope, grab the Fireball and bounce up right

to hit the switch. Now go right and bounce onto the ledge for a coin, then continue to the right and slide down the slope. From here, go to the right and over two lightning balls, jump each ball as it goes into the lower section. Go to the far right and bounce left off the bumper, then off the second bumper and up and to the right. Drop into the hole and

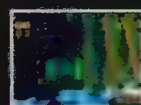
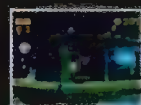
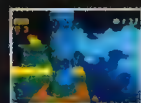
Now drop to the ground and to the right, stand by the booth and wait for the massive gust of wind, hide in the booth as the gust flies past (it comes every 10 seconds), although you do need the gust to fly you up high for lots of coins. Between each gust, jump up the ledges to the next booth just in time before the next gust, then repeat this for the next booth. Now go right and jump onto the sinking ledges, grabbing the coins as they move then use the wind to fly back to the booth, then jump back to the ledges and through the door and onto the blocks in the path, smashing though them form the last few coins and then quickly make a dash for the exit before the next gust of wind.



BOSS 3— WISHING ENGINE



This boss is a two step process. Firstly you have to smash four purple gems, which is done by pushing the green beams along the ring and jumping into them to soar upwards. Once you have smashed all four gems the Cannon Controls will open. The second step involves shooting the giant eyeball that has appeared, to do this, jump on one of the cannon controls to start the shooting, remembering to aim where the eyeball is going to be, not where it is at the time of shooting. Unfortunately the cannon will need reloading, and to do this you must run to the other side of the ring and use the green beams to fly through the triangle which will automatically reload the cannon. It takes ten hits in total to defeat the eyeball. Enjoy!



work your way to the top using the ledges (which get smaller), there's a switch and a Fireball spiral at the top. Once at the top, jump right and right again onto the path, shooting the creatures and jumping the balls, then go to the right and drop through the hole to checkpoint 4.



TESTED

Hexen



MAY CAUSE BRAIN DAMAGE

Release : APRIL
Company : GT INTERACTIVE
Price : £44.95
Players : 1
Genre : SHOOT 'EM UP

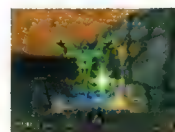
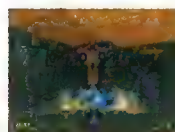
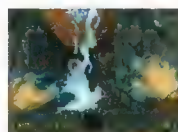
It has taken some time to happen, but at long last PlayStation owners are to be offered a choice of 3D shoot 'em ups that are sure to suit everyone's tastes. Considering its enormous success across every conceivable computer and console format, it's not surprising that *Doom* was first in line for a conversion. Since then fans of laser blasting action, set around science fiction worlds, have also been offered the chance to take on the Empire in *Dark Forces*, race through the claustrophobic tunnels of *Descent*, become a LightStormer for the intergalactic marine corps in *Disrupter* and soon be punters will be treated to the highly acclaimed *Duke Nukem 3D* and *Quake*. As if that weren't enough choice *Lifeforce Tenka* and *Exhumed* are also about to make exciting entrances. Those who prefer their *Doom* clone served up in a sword and sorcery vein, with a heavy dollop of hack and slash on the side, have been left uncatered for, up until now that is...

Anyone who has already played through the original *Heretic* should be able to make a pretty accurate educated guess at the recipe that has been used to cook up *Hexen*; Take a weird alternate dimension, liberally sprinkle with assorted beasts from hell, add more than a pinch of switch and lever related puzzles and chuck in a blender on full power with one doomed adventurer. Voila, a banquet of blood, guts and gore. To take this explanation at face value would be to write the game off without a fair hearing. *Hexen* is billed as more than a simple linear designed *Doom* copy and when the original code was written for PC, the development team set out to twist

the well established formula. Since that time a lot of water has passed under the bridge in game terms and most PlayStation owners are quite rightly looking for more than straight ports. Considering all these facts can *Hexen* still hold its own in such a fiercely competitive market as the 3D action/adventure game after all this time? Read on.

EVIL AFOOT

Whether or not *Hexen* makes it in terms of looks or playability, a great deal of thought has gone into building a complex and involving storyline so let's begin at the beginning. Human settlers in the magically rampant land of *Hexen* discovered long ago that although sorcery can impart all kinds of powers to the user which are beyond belief, magic can also destroy at a terrifying rate and on an unsurpassable scale. For these reasons society

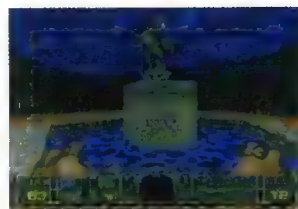


became strictly controlled, with every citizen carefully watched and kept under close control by a small group of dictatorial leaders – their grip on the reins of power held firm through the abuse of a few magical relics. Thus in the interests of 'humanity' order was maintained, uprising crushed and the peasantry efficiently suppressed.

Internal power struggles eventually led those governing the *Hexen* people into splitting up to form three separate groups: the Legion; the Arcanum; and the Church. Chaos and destruction were kept in check through a delicate balance of back scratching and back stabbing. Under the direct control of the Legion, human

armies exercised a reign of terror, brining the populace to their knees to maintain the status quo. These measures were propped up by the Arcanum who took charge of the relics and artifacts, ensuring that only a select few would ever possess the ability to wield their magical power. In between these two factions stood the Church, whose figure heads acted as mediators whilst they secretly carried out magical experiments themselves.

Each of the three orders had one one person at their helm who was able to exercise unrestricted power. Zedek – Marshal of the Legion; Menelkir – Arch Mage of the Arcanum; Traductus – Grand Patriarch



ALTHOUGH SPRITES ARE OFTEN FAIRLY BLOCKY, PLENTY OF DETAIL HAS GONE INTO HEXEN'S GRAPHICS. TURNING MONSTERS TO ICE IS A PARTICULARLY WELL EXECUTED EFFECT.



MORE PICK UPS THAN FORD

A multitude of items, magical artifacts and various power ups are strewn around within Korax's strange domain to help to overcome problems. Some have an instant effect as they are walked over, while others can be stored in the inventory for later use. We have prepared the full list with a brief description of each one to help you out along the way.



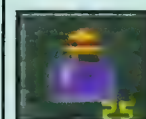
TORCH

Lights up the dark recesses where monsters love to lurk around.



VIAL

Once walked over this instantly adds 10 points to your health.



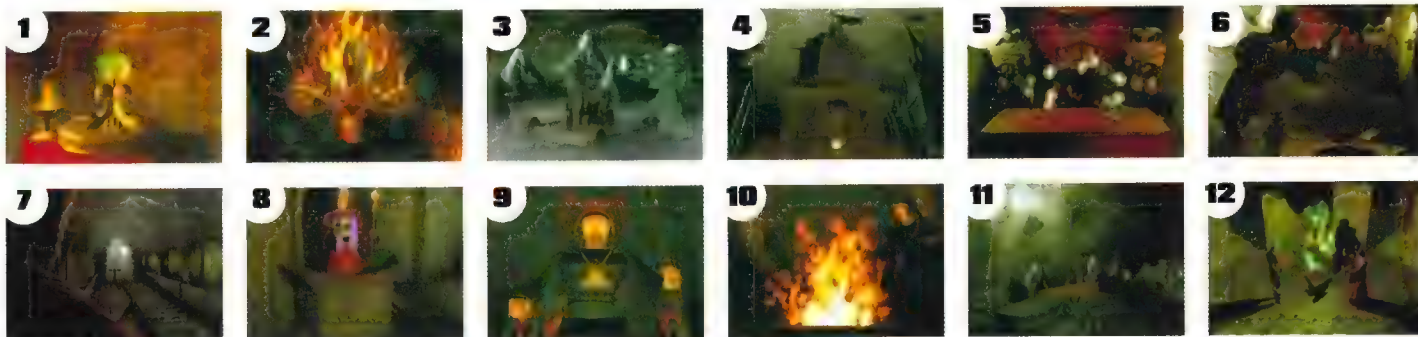
QUARTZ FLASK

Usually found after really tough battles, this adds 25 to health.



MYSTIC URN

More powerful than a bottle of Lucozade, health is restored to max.



(1-12) A LENGTHY RENDERED SEQUENCE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE GAME TELLS A TALE OF CORRUPTION AND ABUSE OF POWER.

of the Church. This unholy trinity kept a strangle hold over the country, but unknown to them a deadly force was looming. From another dimension an evil Serpent Rider named Korax was hatching a plan to lay waste to their land and annihilate the human settlers. Knowing the weaknesses of Hexen's leaders, Korax

offered ultimate power to each them. This temptation of unimaginable strength proved irresistible to Zedek, Menelkir and Traductus who all fell under the influence demon's spells. Their gift from the Serpent Rider was the living death of Unlife and taking the governors' artifacts Korax wiped out the population of Hexen.

goal of each of the three brave adventurers.

MAP PATHS

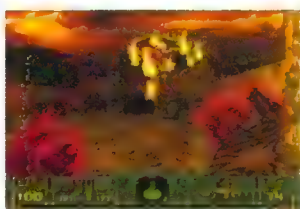
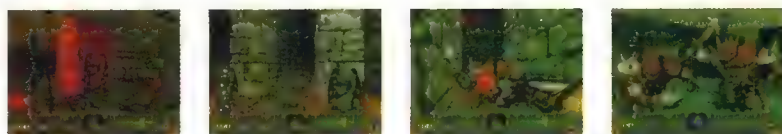
Rather than build the game structure around a single path through separated levels of mazes, designers of *Hexen* decided to try and construct a less rigid environment. What they have come up with is a number of large core sites known as Hubs, connected together by a teleportal system known as Ethereal Travel. In each of these areas different sub levels become available as tasks are completed, but it is necessary to keep jumping between the sections. Using these vortex transporters as links between areas essentially allows one Hub to be loaded into memory at a time, without giving the impression that on completion of one section another will simply follow in an unbreakable pattern.

This is fairly straight forward piece of programming, and at first the multi layered Hub system does impart a feeling of being caught up in one large fortress rather journeying through separate levels. After many hours of play however, when one puzzle is taking a while to work out, visiting and revisiting familiar surroundings starts to get a

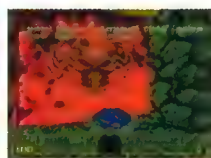
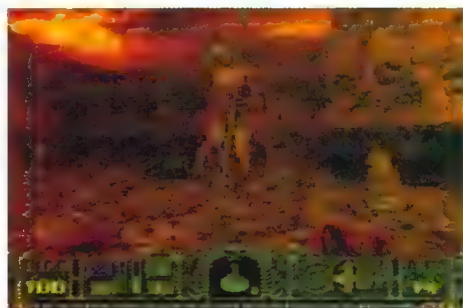
little bit tedious. Once the troublesome riddle has been solved and a new area opened up, the boredom rapidly lifts, although some players may well be tempted to quit early because they are tired of seeing the same series of rooms.

Another way *Hexen* tries to break moulds is to offer a choice of characters, each of whom have strengths and weaknesses. It seems a little unlikely that a country's population, which was split into three classes of people, has been wiped out bar a shining example from each group, but ignoring this detail the general idea should be commended. It feels as if more weaponry is available and because each adventurer has his own discipline, items of destruction belonging to each character follow certain themes. The Warrior's pickups are the rather unsubtle skull splitting implements, whilst the cleric uses crosses and summons ghosts and the Mage relies on a variety deadly spells.

Once the type of character has been selected from the game's options screen it's possible to select five classes of competence. The difference between these levels of difficulty is the amount of baddies pitted against your



Just three fortunate humans survived the carnage: Baratus, a Warrior of the Legion; Parias, a Cleric of the Church; and Daedolon, a Mage of the Arcanum. Now their desperate situation means they must join forces and journey to Korax's fortress, to execute the leaders they once blindly served, cull a multitude of Korax's minions and then find a way to destroy the Serpent Rider himself. Within the inner most chamber of his stronghold, suspended in time and space, lies the Chaos Sphere and it is this fabled artifact that provides Korax with his enormous strength and abilities. Destruction of the Chaos Sphere is the main



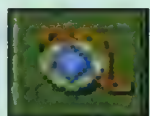
KRATER OF MIGHT Gives the adventurer magical full mana of both colours.



MESH ARMOUR Protection best suited to Warriors and least useful to Mages.



FALCON SHIELD Helps all characters but Clerics will get the best benefits.



AMULET OF WARDING An armour class booster Mages should look out for.



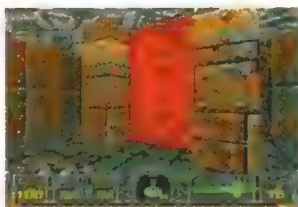
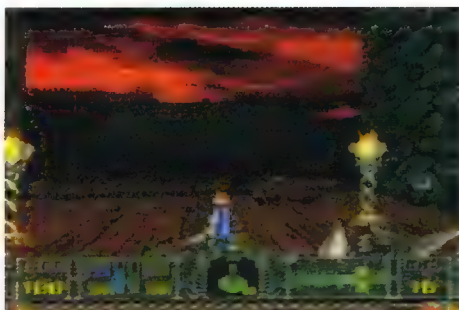
PLATINUM HELM Equally increases protection against attack for all adventurers.



DRAGONSKIN DRACERS Gives a temporary four point armour class increase.



BOOTS OF SPEED Bestows bursts of speed, which varies between characters.



TELEPORTERS DOTTED ALL OVER HEXEN'S ENVIRONMENT ALLOW TRAVEL BETWEEN SUB LEVELS AND HUBS. EXPECT TO KEEP ON TRANSPORTING BETWEEN THE LEVELS AS THIS GAME IS MASSIVE.

hero and the number of recharges left lying around Korax's kingdom. If default settings are accepted, virgin *Hexen* players may find the going very tough as the computer will supply a massive horde of blood thirsty creatures to battle against.

Other than providing a new method of laying out the standard maze and adding a set of individuals to choose between, *Hexen* bears more than a passing resemblance to its mentor *Doom* and all the other clones that were first spawned on the PC. This is not surprising as the same team produced both games, and it feels as if they have cheated just a tad. At a glance most people will recognise the way the graphics are created, in terms of baddies and environment and will be familiar with the way that everything is presented and have a pretty good idea of how progression through the game works. Even so, lets take make a closer inspection of all these factors.

TWISTED DEMONS

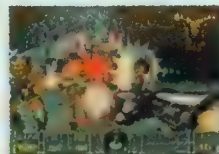
Hexen is set in an alternate dimension so as you'd expect the creatures that lie in wait to suck out your soul are suitably bizarre and disgusting. The standard model of scum

BRAVE HEARTS

Whichever class of character is picked, the path through the game remains the same. However, all have their own benefits and drawbacks, thus offering three challenges. Each begins life with a basic weapon and can discover another three magical weapons that drain mana, but rather than spoil all your fun, the most powerful of these have been omitted.

1 BARATUS THE WARRIOR

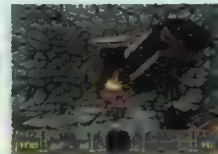
Quickest and most powerful of the three fighters, Baratus is a close combat specialist.



Spiked Gauntlets: slowly but surely punch enemies into a bloody mess.



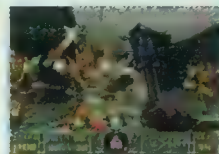
Timon's Axe: quicker and more powerful attacks than the gloves.



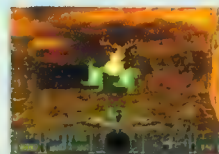
Hammer Of Retribution: useful at range as it fires flaming axes.

2 PARIAS THE CLERIC

Average in most departments, Parias still has some great special attacks up his sleeves.



Mace Of Contrition: fairly fast method of attack but lacks heavy damage.



Serpent Staff: blinking snake eyes that accurately shoot balls of power.



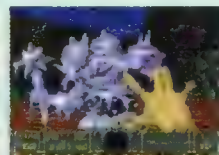
Firestorm: blasts of flames engulf enemies where ever they stand.

3 DAEDOLON THE MAGE

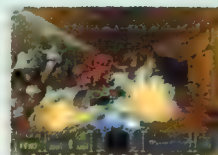
Physically frail Daedolon is expert at launching ranged spells but is useless in hand to hand combat.



Sapphire Wand: blue dart projectile that is fairly weak but has infinite ammo.



Frost Shards: enables the Mage to freeze his opponents to death.



Arc Of Death: fires vertical columns of supercharged electrical energy.

is a two headed beast that is part ogre and part lizard, who favours a mace and likes to attack from behind. As sections are completed in order the adventurer will be confronted by slimy green webbed things that emerge from swamps, large horned serpents that look like Terry Gilliam's Jabberwocky and flaming crow men that spit balls of fire. All in all there

are 11 types of mythical beasts, the three transformed leaders and a very tough Korax. Dealing with foes requires the learning of weak points and testing various out various tactics.

Dispatching monsters to their graves when your hero is carrying the heaviest weapons is simple and in a couple of blows their bodies will explode in a satisfactory

ly gory way. To begin with when feeling weak and vulnerable, the trick is to move backwards and keep striking on the retreat. It is possible to maintain the character's health at maximum level as initially creatures generally can't attack from any distance. It is possible to employ this method even when using a hand to hand weapon, as attack range for



WINGS OF WRATH
Adds flying abilities, but effects only last until the end of a Hub.



DISC OF REPULSION
Deflects monsters, spells and projectiles with a small radius.



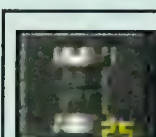
CHAOS DEVICE
If things gets too tough, this teleports you to the start of the level.



BANISHMENT DEVICE
Teleports beasties back to the beginning of levels. Hurrah!



FLETCHETTE
Exploding gas that has different results according to who throws it.



ICON OF THE DEFENDER
Temporary invulnerability from absolute-ly everything.



THE PORKALATOR
Turns horrible adversaries into squealers ready for slaughter.

some reason is considerable. When controlling the fighter for instance, punches can be landed from a great deal further than at arms reach. Something here is not quite right me thinks.

More worrying is the graphical quality of demons, who are well detailed but suffer terribly from over enhanced pixels. Approached from some way off, it is possible to see that the two headed beast is wearing a fetching pair of fluffy trunks, get too close and he turns into a collection of large blocks of assorted colours. This kind of game really relies on building up a tense atmosphere, but having a badly put together lego model jump out at you from the shadows tends to knock down an illusion of that type.

Animation of the sprites also feels a little shoddy, and rather than moving smoothly adversaries jerk about. all over the place. As they run towards the screen, or wave their weapons around, individual graphical frames can be made out -the trouble here seems to be too few a number of static frames refreshing at too slow a rate. Walk into a wide open area which is home to an army of weirdoes, and the problem becomes more apparent not so much because the machine

slows down but just because a whole line of creatures twitching in time with each other amplifies the effect.



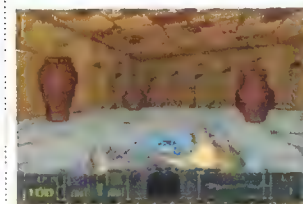
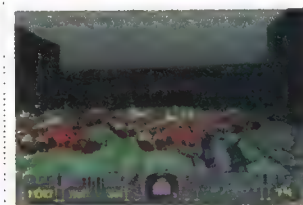
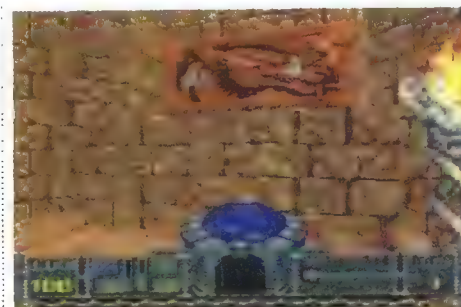
Scenery also suffers from the problem of oversized pixels and although this is far less noticeable as structures should be blocky, bang into a wall and its difficult to tell what the hell is going on. Otherwise the settings are sinister and quite atmospheric, with just enough variety between levels and sub levels to produce the desire to continue playing on and find out what other sections look like. Carvings of death skulls, and dragons are spread across brickwork, stain glass windows are set into alcoves, paving slabs are covered by moss and studs in metal doors leak rust.

Hexen's 3D world is more than just a backdrop to adventuring, offering various natural hazards to catch out the unwary traveller. Pools and rivers of lava need to be avoided and can inflict severe damage if fallen into, earthquakes that rock the screen and rip apart the ground can leave any one of the heros helplessly stuck in deep ravines, disgusting green swamps are home to monsters that surface without warning, fungi explodes and releases clouds of poisonous spores and high cliffs require very careful navigation.

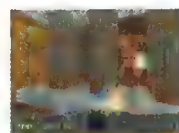
Unfortunately, when a path such as a narrow walk way calls for dexterity or accurately timed jumps, efforts by the player are sadly let down by Hexen's sluggish control system. All the characters suffer from imprecision in most departments, but most frustrating by far is the amount of unstoppable momentum programmers have included. Even simple manoeuvres such

as stepping onto a lifting platform can easily become a nightmare as you are forced to continually tap the control pad to compensate for over the top inertia.

Despite the feeling of running around as Mr Blobby, progression through Korax's strong hold is fairly straightforward. Anyone already familiar with the formula of this genre, and there can't be that many who have never seen a *Doom* clone before, should quickly get into the kill and pull a switch way of life. Generally speaking, none of the problem solving required will over tax the mind and the design team have struck a good balance between mindless slashing and puzzle pondering. Secrets are hidden behind windows, combinations of switches and levers open locks, drop down bars and extend platforms, sections of wall swing around when



ALTHOUGH LOOKING RATHER DATED IN MANY RESPECTS, GT'S LATEST CONVERSION TO THE PLAYSTATION NEVER THE LESS DESERVES THE ATTENTION OF RPG FANS.

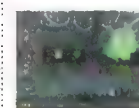
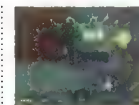


Opinion In many ways, because *Hexen* is pretty much a straight port from the PC, which tends to feel quite dated. Many other 3D action/adventure products offer new engines that bring more and more realism to the genre, so anyone searching out the latest programming techniques will probably be disappointed. Although *Hexen* does have a lot of points in its favour; a theme that will excite fans of swords and sorcery; a very complex level design; and most importantly it's a really tough challenge. Some might suggest that GT have been rather lazy and that they should have put more time into rewriting the original code, and in part this is a justifiable point of view. However if you can put up with graphics that are a little dated, and have yet to become bored of the 3D shoot 'em up genre, then *Hexen* definitely represents very good value for money. JM

touched. Some of the sequences that are completed will be immediately obvious, whilst others will cause changes in completely different areas. If this happens a handy little message, slightly cryptic and easily deciphered, will flash at the top of the screen letting you know exactly where you should head next. Checking the map screen will not only reveal current location, but also name the area and allow a long range over view.

Other than the fact that this is the only 3D dungeons and Dragons style game on the PlayStation market, *Hexen*'s strongest selling point is the size of the challenge to be overcome - this game is truly mammoth. At crucial points, usually just as

you are nearing the completion of an area, an army that seems to consist of thousands of demonic soldiers will be unleashed and quickly hack you to pieces. If you make it past the hordes of baddies and think the end of the game must be close at hand, level after level will knock back those hopes. All in all there are something like 40 tough and demanding stages to get through, which should take the average games player at least several weeks to complete.




Graphics : 77
Animation : 71
Sound FX : 82
Music : 84
Lastability : 89
Playability : 83

84

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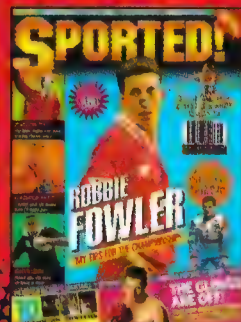
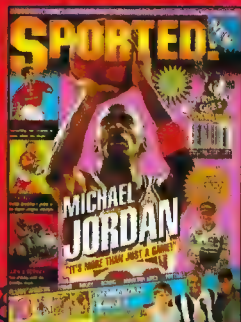
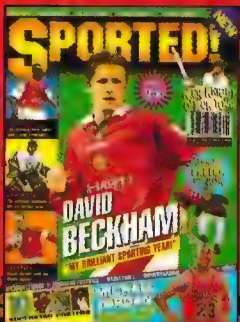
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Spot Goes to Hollywood

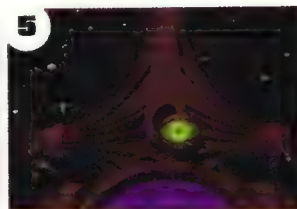


here are delays and there are delays. British Rail delays, for example, probably average out at five or six minutes for every journey. On the other hand, furniture delivery means the buyer may find their chairs and sofas delayed by a day or two. In the grand scheme of things, though, these are nothing compared to the missed release dates and rescheduling which has

gone behind the scenes of Virgin's second *Cool Spot* title. The original *Cool Spot* was the work of Shiny Founder, Dave Perry, with the character licensed from 7-Up, where the character is used to endorse the drink. As with the majority of Perry's 16bit titles, *Cool Spot* was a polished platformer which saw the heroic dot climbing ledges and ropes and avoiding enemy sprites as he attempted to collect as many red dots as possible and free his family. Whereas Perry's *The Jungle Book* game for Virgin featured a Mowgli sprite collecting as many bananas as possible. Oh, while *Earthworm Jim* was a

rescue mission wherein the main character featured a secondary plot involving the collection of atoms. Spot the running theme.

For the sequel, and with Perry moving on to fresher pastures (ie. *Earthworm Jim*), Virgin's US division decided to handle the sequel themselves, with the first major change a decision to take Spot into the third dimension. Or at least add an isometric slant to the proceedings. The game was duly exhibited at 1994's E3 with code the press were informed was 80% complete and set for a September release that year, and was promising to be one of the



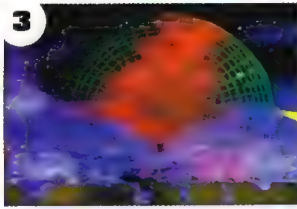
more satisfying titles in the original Sony line-up. Then, for reasons unspecified, Spot went AWOL...

MOVIES, GAMES AND VIDEO

Whereas *Cool Spot*'s first outing involved rescuing family members, the second game features a more convoluted plot. Having slipped from a drinks dispenser (remember the origin of the character...), Spot has accidentally fallen into the inner workings of a cinema projector and, through the magic of video game scenarios, found himself in a world based on film themes. Thus begins our little red hero's plans to return to the real world, which basically involve making his way to the end of each scrolling world, and defeating the 'boss' creature which preside over each location. The beauty of setting the game within the realm of Hollywood, though, is that it allows the developers to plunder a wide range of topics for level themes and the occasional visual gag. As such, Spot's adventures in this celluloid Hollywood take him through worlds based on horror films, pirate movies (the 'yo-ho-ho' sort, not dodgy copies from the local market), and the Indiana Jones-style adventures – not to mention bonus stages stealing from Jurassic Park and Westerns.

'Borrowed' ideas form the basis for every aspect of *Spot Goes to Hollywood*. Despite the new viewpoint, the basic game aim is the same as it ever was. Spot wanders up or across the scrolling stages, avoiding the assorted pirates, Incas, or whatever inhabits each stage, or shooting them with his in-built weapon supply. Contact with the enemy removes one of Spot's energy bars, and if he is hit three times one of his

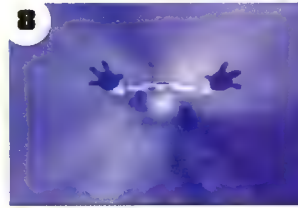
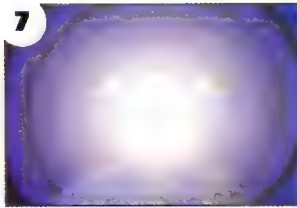
Release : MARCH
Company : VIRGIN
Price : 334.95
Players : 1
Genre : PLATFORM



EACH LEVEL IS PRECEDED BY A RENDERED SEQUENCE SHOWING SPOT'S REACTION TO EACH NEW WORLD. BONUS LEVELS ARE ALSO TREATED TO THE FULL INTRODUCTION TREATMENT.

made slightly more logical (right to walk towards the right, etc), but even this cannot temper some of the annoyance felt, and in a bizarre contradiction of the first control method, makes moving diagonally *too* easy, and walking in a straight line much harder. While the first handful of stages are fairly empty and geared towards weaning the player into the play area, even after several hours of play the controls are still far from instinctive with the player concentrating as much on steering the sprite as they do avoiding the oncoming enemy.

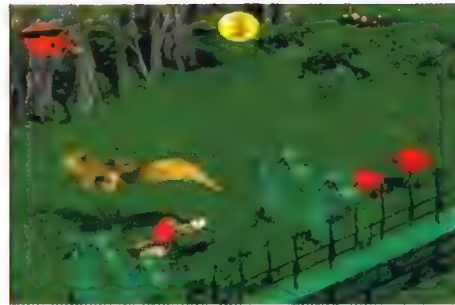
The movie-based worlds are impressive enough, and the level of detail is very precise for a platform game. The galleons which make up the first pirate world are built up from wooden decks, and detailed masts and rigging; while the 'Adventure' world contains stone statues which spit darts, and is built up



three lives are lost. Familiar territory so far. Also dotted around the play area are barrels, crates and similar containers, and these contain the red dots Spot collected in his earlier adventure — with 100 dots equalling an extra life for our hero. Again. However, while the basic aim is to reach the door which acts as the portal to the next stage, a secondary mission is available to the more eager Spotaholics. Hidden across each world are five magical stars, some of which are easy to find while others are hidden within sub-stages. Finding all five requires some extreme diligence on the player's part, but doing so across each of the forty levels within the game rewards the user with an extended end sequence on completion of the game. Whereas completing the game without all the stars results in a rather paltry reward.

WALK THIS WALL

Control over Spot is effected via the Dpad, with the X button prompting him to jump,

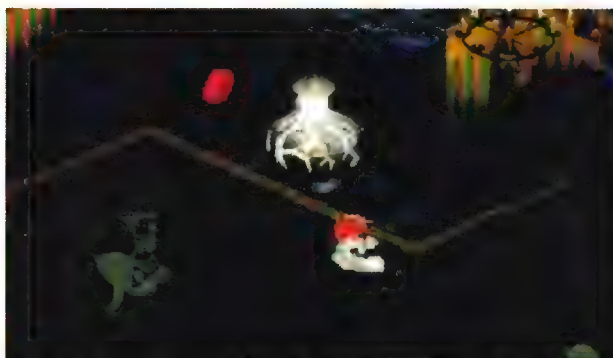
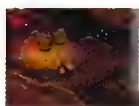
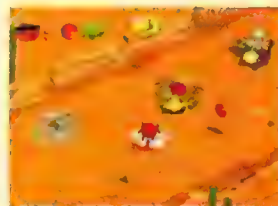
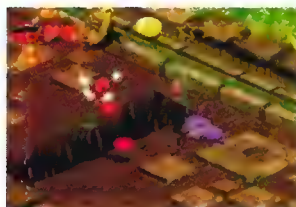


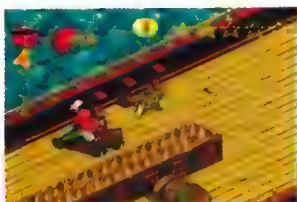
and the square button effecting a jump. However, while ordinarily, this is a system which has worked across countless other platform games, the isometric perspective in his Hollywood outing makes things rather confusing. Whereas, logically, pushing the Dpad upwards should send Spot towards the top of the screen, in *Spot Goes to Hollywood* it prompts him forward (ie. towards the right-hand diagonal of the screen) and also has the unfortunate side-effect of making diagonal movements confusing to effect. To Virgin's credit, a secondary control system has also been added, with the controls

BOSS AND BONUS

Awaiting Spot at the end of each world is a 'Boss' creature which proves considerably more resilient than his underlings which punctuate the rest of the levels. The first boss is a huge Octopus which clambers all over the end of the pirate galleon, while the Horror world is prevailed over by a vampire. For the most part, the bosses simply require shooting several times until their energy bar is fully depleted. However, a slight puzzle element occasionally comes into play. For example, a spider boss cannot be shot, but by jumping on a series of dais, three spikes can be lowered and fired upwards — preferably with the spider above! On completing a world, a bonus level is then unveiled, themed on a different movie style but still containing a wealth of bonuses and stars. These include a Western world, a blatant copy of the T-Rex chase scene from Jurassic Park, and a space-based level which provides a welcome revisitation of the old Zaxxon coin-op.

(RIGHT) SPOT'S ADVENTURES BRING HIM INTO CONTACT WITH THREE BOSSES — ONE FOR EACH WORLD.



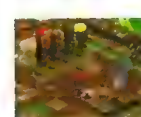
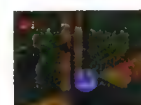
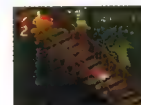
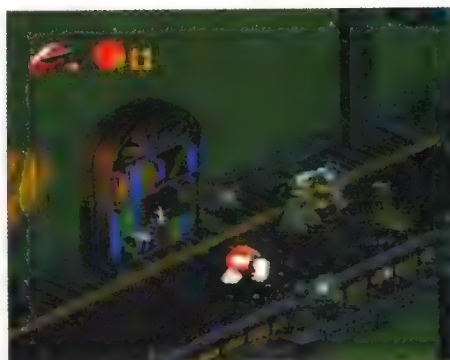
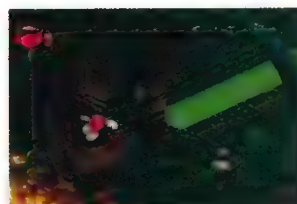


from huge stone walls and muddy floors. Although the game is based around the three main themes, though, at times the stages still seem a little repetitive at times. Imagine all the possibilities afforded by horror films, for example. Chilling images of vampires, for example, or Frankenstein's monster. There are loads of opportunities for sight gags and the like, but instead, the same sprites keep appearing with the trek through the 'Horror' world's graveyard throwing up a few wolves and pumpkins, and the same sprites

reappearing in the haunted house which follows. Considering the time the game has been in development, and the promises made the lack of sprites and even some of the more dubious animation don't exactly look like nearly two years' work.

MISSING, PRESUMED..

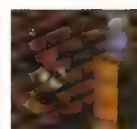
When we previewed *Spot Goes to Hollywood* way back in issue one of *PlayStation Plus*, we were told of numerous film ideas which were to be incorporated in the game. There was to be a Ben Hur level, a world based on old black and white classics, and even spoofs of *Aliens*, *Tron* and *Terminator*. These are rather conspicuous by their absence. Apparently, such ideas were within the game's storyboard right until the game's approval stage, when all of a sudden a number of copyright problems meant that the more obvious references (Facehuggers, for example) had to be omitted and this is part of the reason the code was so delayed. Even so, considering the number of opportunities presented by the movie world in



A NUMBER OF VEHICLES ARE AVAILABLE TO OUR LITTLE RED HERO, WITH THE HAUNTED HOUSE HOUSING A BUBBLE TO REACH THE BONUS-LADEN AREAS OF THE BUILDING.

Opinion *Cool Spot* on the Super NES and Megadrive was an unremarkable but very playable platform title, and there are traces of it within this more attractive sequel. However, niggles with the control system mean that *Spot Goes to Hollywood* isn't quite as easy to get into as the original, while some of the levels prove a tad dull and repetitive. Considering the long gestation period the game has enjoyed, sloppy animation and limited sprite detail makes the game look rushed, and ultimately gives the game the look of something that should have been released eighteen months ago. While still quite playable, there is something very dated about this second *Spot* installment, and I can't help but feel that Virgin should have cut their losses and released it earlier, as there is no way that this resembles or plays like a game benefiting from two years of hard graft. Still, the cheaper price is a very nice touch, as is the John Williams score. Flawed, but passable.

5M

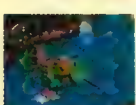
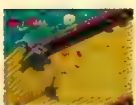


nate side-effect of making the game look rushed. Improbable considering the development time.

THE MOVIE

When all is said and done, *Spot Goes to Hollywood* is a more than adequate platform game, but is let down by a couple of important factors. Neither control method is particularly successful, making for a less than instinctive game – essential in a platform offering such as this – and the lack of detail given to some of the sprites lessens the impact of the stunning backdrops and occasional graphical flourish. After two years of development perhaps we were hoping for too much, but after all the promises made by the developers and even allowing for the limitation set by copyrights being withheld, it's obvious that *Spot Goes to Hollywood* could, and should, have been so much better. The bare essence of playability is there and proves that with tinkering it could have been as easy to pick up as the predecessor, but ultimately there are too many 'what if's' left to ask.

AH, WHERE WOULD A PLATFORM GAME BE WITHOUT THE SEEMINGLY OBLIGATORY MINE CART STAGE?



TICKET TO RIDE

This second *Cool Spot* outing is billed as featuring 'a huge variety of game styles.' This isn't actually that true. For the most part, the game is centred around the platform stages, but every now and then a driving lesson of sorts is added to the proceedings. For example, *Cool Spot* may jump on a cannon and then ride it to the end of the stage. Or he may grab a broom in the Horror stage and... um, ride it to the end of the stage/ In the course of the game, he also rides a raft, drives a mine cart, and sits in a spaceship. And in keeping with the game's frequent borrowing of past ideas, *Spot Goes to Hollywood* also steals from Sega's old *Frogger* and *Zaxxon* coin-ops for a little extra variety.

general, *Spot Goes to Hollywood* still seems to short-change the player. There are times when real imagination comes into play, with huge crab sprites scuttling out of crates and pirates swinging around the masts, but other when it was obviously felt that if loads of sprites were thrown at the player then they would forget the fact that they were less than perfectly animated. As such, following an attack of well designed wolves in the Horror world, a bunch of pumpkins and bats then proceed to fly in formation for the next half of the level. While this in itself is adequate, it also has the unfortu-



PSP RATING

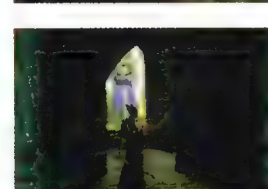
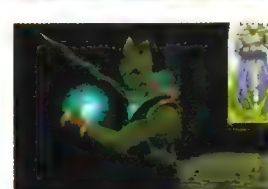
Graphics : 83
Animation : 76
Sound FX : 79
Music : 87
Lastability : 76
Playability : 78

77

Believe the hype.

By now, you know exactly what's happening on March 1st. Enough said.





Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain



Vampires though, they're great aren't they? I mean, think about it... you get to sample a different virgin every night (a la Jim Morrison), travel as a cloud of mist (without visiting the curry house before hand), fly off in the guise of a bat if you miss your bus, and – as long as you

avoid anyone who looks even vaguely like Peter Cushing – live forever. Not bad, eh? And what's more, you get to live in a castle that's always surrounded by lightening, and talk in a strange-but-non-specific European drawl. "Vot sveet music zey mayke".

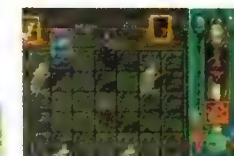
Then again sunlight's a definite no-go, wooden stakes do nothing for the

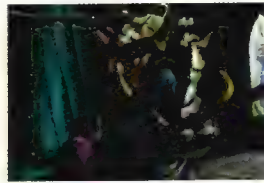
digestive system, and holy water is very bad for the complexion. Ah, the lord giveth and then the lord taketh away again.

Of course there is a way to enjoy the good bits without risking the bad bits, and that's to grab hold of BMG's latest release, *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain*. The story behind the game is actually a

very good one – and one beautifully animated in a lengthy introduction sequence – but fortunately doesn't get in the way of the fun. You are (and there's no avoiding it) a gittish vampire, but one who wants to lift the curse and pass on to the next world. However, as you strive to achieve your ultimate goal you're still bound by the laws

Release: MARCH
Company: BMG
Price: 44.99
Players: 1
Genre: ACTION/ADVEN





of Nosfaratu, so killing innocent villagers and sucking the blood from their bodies still occupies a great deal of your time, and thanks to the way this deed is represented on-screen, you'll never tire of it! Simply attack the unfortunate victim until they're near to death (at which point they go into a pre-death 'Waver' state) then press the right button and watch as a stream of blood flies across the screen and into your waiting mouth. As if that wasn't satisfying enough, you then get to see your health bar

yourself, and though you're always happy to find the special item required to heal the Pillar of the Mind or the Pillar of Conflict (or whatever) you sort of just come upon them while hacking and sucking your way round the world.

Truth be told, more compelling is the quest for new powers and spells.

You see, being fairly new to this vampire gig, you start with nothing more than the ability to suck blood and teleport back to the safety of your sanctuary (which

you'll need to do if things get hairy 'cos you don't get three lives here folks, just your vial of blood – and *that's* why you have to empty necks along the way). And so it is that you need to explore the villages, temples and caves that litter the impressively large world map, searching for magical items and new powers.

The fun comes in three categories; forms, items and spells. The forms are dramatic and essential (as well as bloody good fun to muck about with!) as they allow you to turn into the various trademark creations that are synonymous with vampires. First up comes the bat – allowing you to fly between major landmarks quickly as well as reach otherwise inaccessible areas. Next up is the form of a werewolf; able to swipe enemies with long claws, run at high speeds and, most importantly, jump over obstacles and between different levels of landscape. Further fun comes from form abilities that allow you to

travel unchallenged in the guise of a humble villager, and even as a cloud of mist able to pass through walls. And there's more!

SPELLING TEST

As if being able to alter your physical form wasn't enough, you also have access to a number of powerful spells. Your use of these spells is only limited by a magical energy supply (that can be replenished by collecting special objects or simply left to regenerate over time) and, of course, finding the spells in the first place. Apart from the aforementioned Sanctuary Spell, there are energy bolt spells, magical protection spells and illumination spells (which are very handy in some of these nasty, dark dungeons, I can tell you!) One of my particular favourites is the 'inspire hate' spell that affects all enemies near by, turning them into nutters that attack each other while you look on amused. Enter a room full of enemies and the

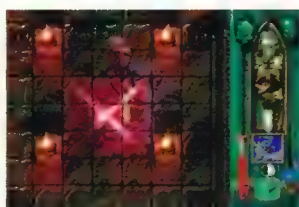


(represented by a vial of blood in the status panel) fill until it's overflowing. Very messy and very nice.

NICE TEETH

One of the key factors behind *Blood Omen's* success is the use of lots of 'nice' touches. The aforementioned blood transfusion effect is but one example of where an activity that could very easily have been represented in a bland and simplistic way, is presented in an elaborate and rewarding way. There are lots of these sick touches throughout, so enjoy the 'free meal' of a helpless virgin chained to the wall. In the same way that it's hard to simply suck a Fruit Pastel, you'll find it impossible to walk past a vulnerable maiden without stopping to relieve her of her haemoglobinous burden. But I'm getting ahead of myself...

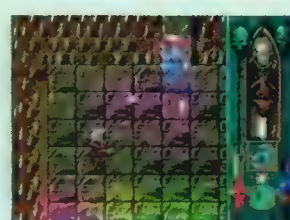
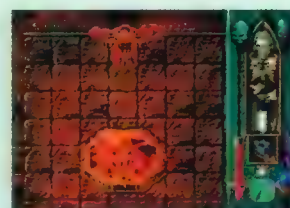
The basic premise behind the point of *Blood Omen* is that, to ditch the vampire curse you must 'heal' the nine pillars of power that have been tainted by the evil that covers the land. This is accomplished almost accidentally as you wander through the game enjoying

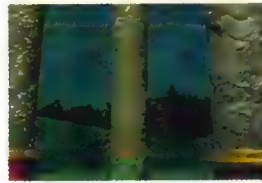
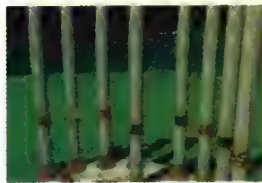
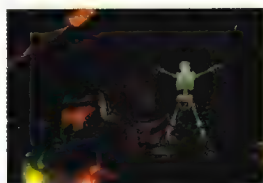


THIS INVENTORY SCREEN (LEFT) ALLOWS YOU TO CHECK EXACTLY WHAT ALL THE SPELLS, WEAPONS AND ARTIFACTS DO, AS WELL AS GIVING YOU THE CHOICE OF WHICH ONES YOU WANT TO ARM KAIN WITH.

IT'S A KIND OF MAGIC

Being a member of the undead club, not only do you get to participate in decapitation weekends and blood sucking competitions, but you also get to dabble in the magical arts. Change into animals, hurl bolts of lightening from your hands and shrink opponents until they implode... oh, they're all here to enjoy time and time again!





first instinct is to draw your sword, pull out a few spell and get stuck in, but the clever vampire will sit back and let the dark arts do his work for him...

And then there are the magical items... oh yes, now the *real* fun begins.

Yet another attractive feature of *Blood Omen* is that the various magical items found in the game are represented by tarot cards. It's also worth mentioning that, to avoid confusion, the first time you pick up a new item, Kain's voice-over informs you of what you're dealing with (dealing, cards... geddit?) and exactly how to use it. On

the whole, these items are offensive and are only there to weaken opponents from a distance before getting stuck in with your chosen weapons (and yes, there are tons of those to choose from as well – each with a special attribute!) but there are also defensive spells that top up your blood supply or protect you from poison. So what sick and twisted effects can you expect from these offensive spells? Well there are certainly enough to choose from (and, incidentally, each one is accompanied by Kain's detailed explanation – and doesn't he know how to make them sound as messy as possible!) ranging from spinning disks that flay flesh from bodies, to spells that shrink the recipients skin, to spells that form pools of acidic slime. Needless to say, each one is represented in a most graphic way!

Puzzling Times

As mentioned before, to heal the pillars to need to acquire various 'tokens'. These objects vary from monsters' heads to magical orbs to enchanted helmets. As you'd expect, these objects aren't just going to appear in your local Argos, so first up is a bit of exploration and detective work, and then it's time to plan a raid. Getting to the key object generally involves an Indiana Jones-like journey over booby-trapped spiked pits, loaded pressure pads, and locations chock-full of nasty creatures, so a good knowledge of your magical abilities and their nuances is essential. There are also secret areas and items to be found, so activate switches, test pressure pads, and don't be afraid to move non-stationary objects around to see what you might accidentally activate. You can also glean much information and hints from villagers, so take the time to talk to them while in disguise (before changing back to a vampire and killing them, obviously).

As well as constantly upgrading your magical abilities, you can make use of various weapons and armour. Swords come in three differ-

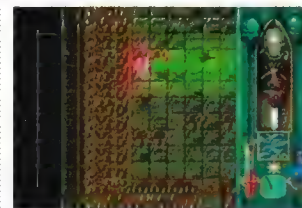
Opinion *Blood Omen* is a unique and thoroughly enjoyable game. It doesn't try to copy anything that we've already seen on the PlayStation, doesn't care about utilising motion capture or thousands of polygons, and just focuses on fun and making the most of the vampire connection. From the word go you're hacking through the realm of the undead and know that you're going to have a good time. The fiendish traps and location layouts are all very atmospheric, and with so many spells and magical toys to play around with, you'll have a blast whether you're really trying to complete the game or just wandering around having fun. An incredibly playable and rewarding game.

PM

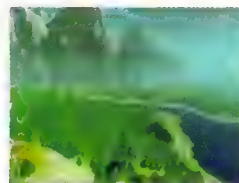
ent flavours (regular, flaming and the all powerful Soul Reaper) but there's also axes, and maces to be had. While there are different suits of armour which are much more effective against specific foes. Again, this is all for the player to find and exploit, adding greatly to the compulsion to keep playing.

GLAD VIBES

The reason for *Blood Omen*'s success is a fairly simple one; imagination and application. Not only is *Legacy of Kain* packed with great ideas, but the way they have been applied both visually and practically makes the game great fun to play. Grim though the various spells and activities sound, the game still has an almost *Zelda*-like playability, and before you know it you've wandered round a great number of different villages, discovered and plundered all manner of



BY TAKING ON THE DISGUISE FORM (BELOW LEFT) YOU APPEAR TO BE A REGULAR CITIZEN, THUS ENABLING YOU TO NOT ONLY AVOID BEING ATTACKED, BUT TO TALK TO THE LOCAL TOWNSFOLK AND GATHER INFORMATION.



spell-containing caves, and slit more throats than Sweeney Todd. One minute you'll be overflowing with life force and killing just for the pleasure of it, and the next you're forced to make the best use of your spells and abilities to walk away from a scene without having to resort to using the panic button (ie changing into a bat and flying away pronto!)

Maybe it's just the subject matter that appeals most, but BMG have managed to cram so much into this simple

but engrossing game that it can't be ignored. Just because the graphics don't look incredible on the page, it doesn't mean that there isn't one hell of a game waiting to be played here – so go get yourself a copy.

PSP RATING...

Graphics : 88

Animation : 88

Sound FX : 87

Music : 88

Lastability : 90

Playability : 93

92



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Twisted Metal World Tour

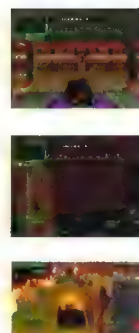
Cast your mind back just over a year to the launch of the PlayStation. Those heady times of the first *Mortal Kombat 3* conversion for any home system, news of *Ridge Racer Revolution* which promised to allow two machines to be linked, the first sightings of *Tekken*, and news that virtually every software house imaginable had three or more titles lined up for the machine. Headly times indeed, but along the way a few of Sony's more original titles were overlooked – with *Twisted Metal*, in particular, not getting half the recognition it deserved. One of the main reasons *Twisted Metal* kind of missed out on its deserved limelight was that it was released just weeks after Psygnosis' more high profile *Destruction Derby* was released, and consequently overshadowed by what is quite simply a better game in every department. Still, life isn't fair or West Ham would be league leaders by now.

Now, however, with *Destruction Derby 2* out on the shelves Sony are set for another crack with *Twisted Metal 2*. Subtitled World

Tour, the sequel is bigger and badder than the original, and has opened up its levels into sprawling circuits which allow the user complete freedom to explore. Similarly, as with all good sequels, *Twisted Metal 2* has upped the ante in terms of available weaponry and opponents, which in turn has added the side effect of even more destruction and carnage to the game.



Free-For-All
If you are unfamiliar with the *Twisted Metal* idea, basically it is a free-for-all racing game, where a variety of unusual vehicles are dropped into a number of arenas and a strange take on the 'last one standing' theme begins. One of the major advantages the first game had over *Destruction Derby* was its non-linear play area. Although the tracks weren't exactly original, some of the later levels – the suburban one in particular – allowed the player to battle it out across a huge playing area, making for car chases which wouldn't have looked out of place in 'The Italian Job.' Apart from this, *Twisted Metal* also benefited from



being more action-packed than the Psygnosis game, although it seemed that punters preferred the rendered and light-sourced vehicles of *Destruction Derby* over the admittedly rough looking but supremely controllable *Twisted Metal* vehicles.

SingleTrac, the development team behind the original and *Warhawk* (also largely ignored at the same time), have thankfully stuck to their guns for the World Tour sequel, and while this second *Twisted Metal* installment is hardly threatening to *Wipeout 2097* or *Rage Racer* for their graphical crowns, it has playability in spades – an often forgotten ingredient in PlayStation games. World

HIDDEN CARS



SWEET TOOTH AND MINION ARE THE TWO HIDDEN VEHICLES.

Release : MARCH
Company : SONY
Price : £44.95
Players : 1-2
Genre : RACING GAME

Tour basically takes the destructive elements of the first game and expands them in every direction. There are more vehicles, more backdrops, and a larger array of weapons, but the best aspect of the game has got to be the level of design.

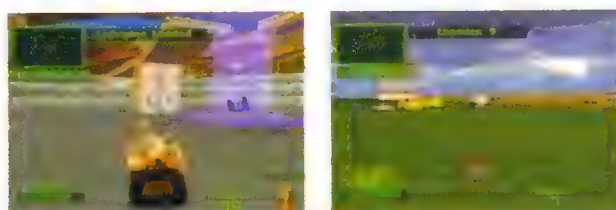
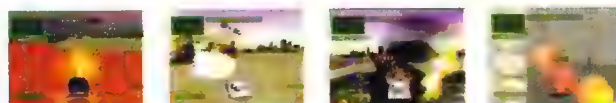
OPEN SPACES

As the title suggests, *Twisted Metal 2* has left the confined arenas of the original, and is now set in post-apocalyptic versions of some of the world's major cities. LA, for example, has been devastated by one too many earthquakes, while Paris in the springtime is all the more appealing when you can tear around the base



— and even in the Eiffel Tower! Other levels also include Tokyo, a volcanic wasteland, a rather confined Moscow, and New York where the game is set on the top of a huge tower block. And, yes, there's even an ice world. Now there's an original idea...

Graphically, the game is as rough and ready as the cars that it contains. The assorted vehicles are blocky-looking sprites, and the backdrops are large but less than intricately-drawn. However, what they lose in aesthetics, they more than make up for in their additions to the game-play. For the first time in such a game, the backdrop plays an integral part in the battling action. For example, during the Paris level, the player can warp into the structure of the Eiffel Tower and collect the bonuses within. However, while they are doing by unleashing a stream of missiles at the metallic structures legs, it is possible to knock it over, wrecking a valuable monument AND reducing the opposition's energy in one move! A secondary side effect to such actions, however, is that the newly-fallen tower acts as a bridge on to the Paris rooftops with the hollow inside acting as a tunnel! Interacting the backdrops is a lot of the fun to *Twisted Metal 2*, and as the game progresses and the battles heat up, so new discoveries are made. It's



possible to blow away the Hollywood sign, for example, while the ice level can be made even more precarious by exploding bombs in the middle of the ice floes, blowing holes into them.

ONE CAREFUL OWNER

The action is viewed from behind the player's vehicle, and pressing the Select button while holding the DPad up allows this to be switched between a number of preset views. Extra viewing options, such as mirrors, can also be added in this way. The play



(LEFT) EACH CHARACTER HAS BEEN GIVEN A SEPARATE BIOGRAPHY, DETAILING THEIR BASIC MOVES AND BATTLE TACTICS.

ENDOWED WITH MIRACULOUS ABILITIES, THE VEHICLES CAN EVEN WALK ON WATER. ALTHOUGH ATTEMPTING THE SAME ON LAVA RESULTS IN A RAPID DIS-INTEGRATION OF THE VEHICLES TYRES.

area obviously takes up the majority of the screen, but a radar highlighting the opposition's vehicles uses coloured dots to indicate each one's position, while an energy bar to the left of the screen is used to monitor the player's health. Similarly, when another car joins battle, a secondary panel appears and indicates their status. In all, there are a dozen vehicles on offer, each with individual strengths and weaknesses and range from two giant wheels with a man suspended between the two, cop cars, APCs, and monster trucks, and these are driven by equally oddball characters who are profiled during the vehicle select screen.

On starting the game, the vehicle uses a mixture of the Dpad and the facia buttons

TWO CAN PLAY AT THAT GAME...

Twisted Metal 2 supports a dual-player mode, via a split-screen. On selecting a two-player game, options appear to co-operate or kill each other, and the city of the player's choice is available for the battle — including a handful of hidden stages. Depending on the level selected, the screen is split either horizontally or vertically, with the latter the preferable. As in the first game, the horizontal split limits the distance ahead the player can see, making the game considerably harder to play as it is easy to miss hidden areas and power-ups don't appear until too late.



THE OPTIONS SCREEN ALLOWS THE USER TO OPT FOR EITHER A VERTICAL OR HORIZONTAL SPLIT-SCREEN MODE. THE FORMER ALLOWS THE USER TO SEE MORE OF THE HORIZON, WHILE THE LATTER MAKES CORNERING EASIER AS MORE OF THE IMMEDIATE ROAD CAN BE SEEN.



(1-7) IF A BOMB IS LEFT INSIDE THE EIFFEL TOWER, IT DETONATES AND KNOCKS THE ANCIENT MONUMENT OVER. ANYTHING WITHIN THE AREA AT THE TIME OF DETONATION IS HEAVILY DAMAGED, BUT THE ICON-LADEN ROOFTOPS ARE ACCESSIBLE THANKS TO THE NEWLY-CREATED EIFFEL BRIDGE.

to accelerate, turn and reverse, which the car does with superb accuracy. No matter which vehicle is selected, control over them is nothing short of superb. They turn on a six pence, perform stunning skids, and jump ramps with ease — and it is here that the graphical rough edges are immediately forgotten. The speed at which the chases take place is breath-taking, and only serves to accentuate the control over the cars. While the Dpad is used to steer the car, weapon selection is effected using the L and R buttons, with the first set used to cycle through the weapons which are available, and the second set to actually fire both the special weapons and machine guns.

MOBILE ARMOURY

Each vehicle is equipped with an unlimited supply of bullets for its machine gun, and is also equipped with a special attack peculiar to that vehicle. The police car, for example, is armed with an electrical beam familiar to anyone who played the first game, while the game's F1 car uses a gravity beam to throw cars around, and a JCB just smashes the crap out of them. In addition to these basic moves, extra

firepower is also dotted around the play area and is added to the player's inventory by running into it. The extra armaments available are projectiles for the most part, including homing and conventional missiles, napalm packages, and ricochet bombs (which live up to their name by scudding across the play area until they hit something) — although Turbo boosts and extra energy also line the route. The currently selected weapon is highlighted at the bottom-right of the screen, and launched using L2. However, this is where an element of confusion enters the proceedings, as the shoulder button configuration often causes confusion with the player accidentally cycling through the weapons as opposed to firing them.

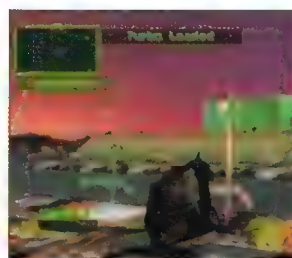
The majority of complaints which can be levelled at



(FAR LEFT) HONG KONG FEATURES A HIDDEN TUNNEL, WHICH SPANS THE CITY — ALTHOUGH BUSES TEND TO BLOCK THE WAY.

Opinion I was quite a fan of the original *Twisted Metal*, and enjoyed the rough'n'ready gameplay. However, the limited courses made for a game which showed great potential, and while the suburban level showed signs of non-linearity, it falls to this sequel to expand upon this. Basically, *Twisted Metal 2* is as rough around the edges as the first game, and graphically suffers from all the major stalling blocks of the last game. However, by opening up the courses, the developers have created a much better game, with huge play areas to explore, and enough hidden features to liven it up further — with the Eiffel Tower section deserving a special mention. I actually prefer *Twisted Metal 2* over the more polished *Destruction Derby 2*, as it is quite simply more playable. And that, after all, is what games are all about.

SM



game at times. That said, as with the first game, any incidental faults are made up for by the sheer playability World Tour offers. The cars are extremely responsive to control, and are well balanced so that the battles are never too biased in one vehicle's favour. Hopefully, this second bite of *Twisted Metal* will get more recognition than the first, as it is certainly one of the most immediate and playable arcade racers for a while.

Twisted Metal 2 are those applicable to the original. The two-player mode is a tad limited, and some of the levels make control nigh-on impossible, with the lava level standing out as a particularly bad example. As the players jump from ledge to ledge the cars bounce so much that they become nigh-on impossible to control, making for an incredibly frustrating and annoying



PSP RATINGS...

Graphics : 86
Animation : 79
Sound FX : 82
Music : 84
Lastability : 86
Playability : 90

88

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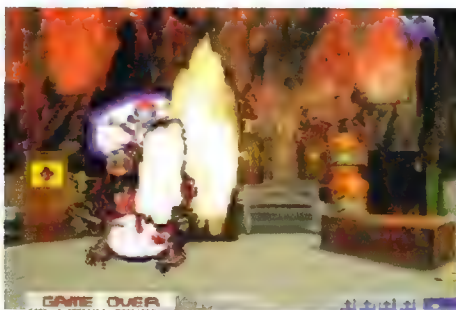
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Area 51

Within the next few years, *PlayStation Plus* predicts the recognition by medical science of 'Area 51 Fatigue Syndrome' or AFFS, causing sick-and-tiredness of hearing about this base in the Nevada desert which apparently houses alien craft (whose pilots were smart enough to navigate for at least four light years, then stupid enough to crash during atmospheric flight). The American networks will be sued by sufferers, Fox TV will drop all sci-fi shows and thus effectively stop broadcasting, Murdoch will go bust and ex-cast members of Knots Landing will never work again.

Sadly games like *Area 51* bring out such raw emotion. In the incestuous chain that characterises the arcade industry these days this is a target-shooting property of Atari Games, picked from the Atari corp. carcass by Williams, then licensed to its in-the-home bedfellow GT. At the times when one wonders how a company as large as Atari could ever be left in the state it's in, look at titles like *Area 51* and the mist clears. Obviously, it attempts to borrow the excitement and intensity brought back to target-shooting games by Sega's *Virtua Cop* and Namco's *Time Crisis*, but skillfully manages to body swerve both qualities in favour of a quick spin

AS YOU CAN SEE THIS IS A RUNNING BATTLE WHICH TAKES PLACE IN AND AROUND THE BASE, TAKING IN AIR-FIELDS, OFFICES AND LABORATORIES AMONGST OTHERS.

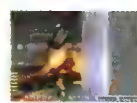
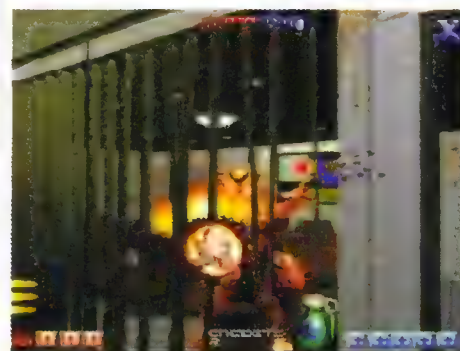


Release : MARCH
Company : GT INTERACTIVE
Price : £44.95
Players : 1-2
Genre : SHOOT 'EM UP



through someone else's rendering demo.

Most target-shooting games are characterised by a lack of player control over the progression of the action. The player's freedom is to point his gun at the enemy, but not turn his head or walk towards them. Only *Time Crisis* has attempted to expand the player's autonomy to a small degree. As everything follows a pre-determined path, the programmer has the option of using pre-rendered graphics to create background effects impossible to generate in realtime. Of course, his ability to allow the player to interact with these backgrounds is removed, so he may, in the case of the second part of *Die Hard Trilogy*, choose to generate in realtime. *Area 51* has tried to



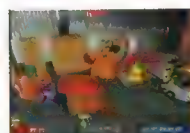
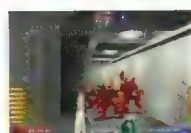
square this circle by using pre-rendered images of air-fields, hangers and complex interiors, then overlaying them with enemy sprites and some other sprites designed to enmesh with the background, eg. windows, pictures, barrels. There's some loss of clarity in these renderings, designed on a SGI machine with more screen

memory than the PlayStation has total RAM, and the effect of the layered sprites never quite convinces you that both characters and scene are meant for each other. The worst aspect of the whole design method of this game is not aesthetic at all – it's simply that it is going to be the same each time you play.





IT'S NOT ALL WALK, WALK YOU KNOW. HITCH A RIDE WITH THIS JEEP DRIVER AND TAKE PART IN A FRANTIC CHASE ACROSS AN AIRFIELD TO CATCH A HELICOPTER RIDE.



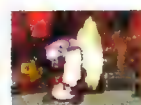
Opinion Games are like films: you do the deal in batches. So when the BBC bought *Magnum Force*, someone put *Firefox* in the box. Guess what came to GT with *Mortal Kombat*? *Area 51* is not very inspiring as a game in general or as a game of its genre. The graphics have been out-rendered by all things recent; from the intro visuals of *Soul Edge*, to the real-time visuals of *Time Crisis*. Time is indeed the key to the buying dilemma as it relates to the current crop of shooting games. The best things come to he who waits.

GS



PROLONGING THE AGONY

The repetitive aspect, which is not a worrying consideration for arcade designers, keeps console game designers awake long after their bedtime. The repeated, intense playing that a console game gets shows up this flaw very quickly, and the only option is to offer new modes or whole new areas of gameplay. *Area 51*'s convertor was obviously fond of his kip, since the PlayStation version doesn't seem to worry with any new features of note. There is still the skip option which allows you to bypass the sequences depicting the base perimeter and first hanger, but playing through would reveal that this only accounts for about 10 minutes of playing time anyway! The main supplementary challenge is 'streaking'. This does not require you time-travelling to Anfield sometime in the 70s and making an exhibition of yourself before the Scally Derby. It merely requires scoring a succession of hits



without missing. The longer the Streak, the nicer the badge and rank offered on the high-score table. 'Merely'; such a descriptive adverbial, isn't it?

CALIBRATING YOUR RESPONSE

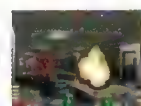
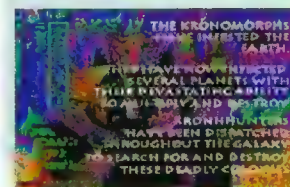
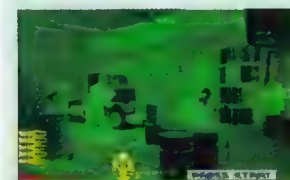
For many PlayStation owners, the prospect of ill-formed aliens and an uncontrollable game path are nought, when the prospect of shooting things rears its head, as it does too infrequently on PlayStation. You either have a gun and an unsatisfied urge from *Die*

Hard Trilogy, or the government have just banned you from practising with your pistol. You want to know how accurately *Area 51* responds. The calibration menu ensures it responds accurately enough with a bit of tweaking and game supports joystick options for the less well-endowed. One niggle about firing is the method of using the smart bomb. You shoot the icon at the bottom of the screen, an action that proves impossible if you decide to play the game from an improbably low angle. *PlayStation Plus* readers are advised never to play games from improbable angles. Nor are they advised to buy un-augmented conversions of arcade games that weren't much (*Virtua*) Cop in the first instance. In short, they are advised not to buy *Area 51*.

THE FINAL BATTLE ENTAILS YOU TRYING TO SHOOT DOWN THIS UFO (LEFT) WHILE KEEPING THE GROUND CLEAR OF ALIENS.

BE AN ALIEN

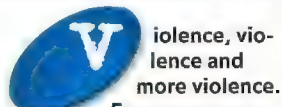
The conversion supports an easily accessible cheat from the original that allows player's to play from the perspective of a Kronn Hunter — an alien mercenary blighted to see the universe as a lurid shade of green. To reach him, players must deliberately shoot their Starr colleagues: that's the unconvincing ex-Knots Landing walk-ons in the blue Alexandra Workwear overalls. Comprenez? Three shots and your conversion to being a green eyed monster is almost complete.



PSP Rating...
Graphics: 62
Animation: 58
Sound FX: 64
Music: 61
Lastability: 43
Playability: 57

52

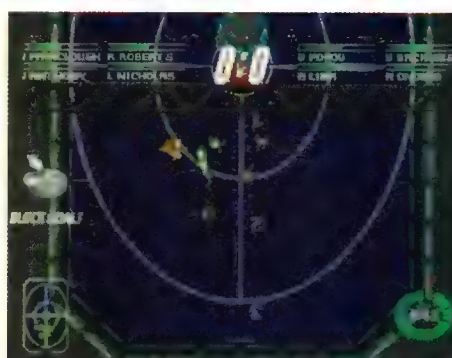
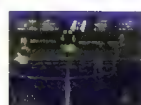




Violence, violence and more violence. For some reason games set in the near future are all full contact, horrific blood baths, where skill takes a back seat and fisty cuffs are the order of the day. In reality sports such as boxing, fencing and even ice hockey have actually cleaned up their acts and are now far less dangerous. But as we've all been told a hundred times, the future will be a dark and dangerous place so maybe there'll be no place for good sportsmanship. I suppose that if tidily winks were played toward the end of the next century those little plastic counters would be replaced with razor blades.

As is usually the case, the culprits behind a deadly new kind of sport are the Americans. Not content with renaming football as soccer and inventing the most boring use for a large bat, the Yanks have come up with a world league event called *Riot*. Such has been the popularity of this game that by the year 2078 Basketball, Hockey, Boxing and American Football have all died out, losing their biggest stars to the cash on offer in *Riot*. This latest form of culturally accepted violence has taken over the entire world, so cricket on a summers day could be gone forever.

Two teams take part in *Riot*, with the aim of scoring more points than opponents within a set time limit. This is achieved by throwing a burning ball of plasma into a hoop-type thing that is suspended above the middle of a court. Just how players are able to handle a very hot ionised gas, which has approximately equal numbers

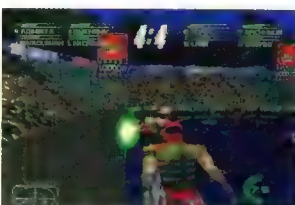


three, two or one points, and where a player stands when scoring corresponding points will be awarded.

Unlike dull sports which rely on a mixture of skill and experience, in *Riot* most of the stars exercise brute force to win games. A lack of rules or penalties for fouling means sportsmen tend to punch, kick and generally bulldozer their way to victory. It is possible, however unlikely, to play a relatively clean game and go for a tactically aware passing system. Take your pick.

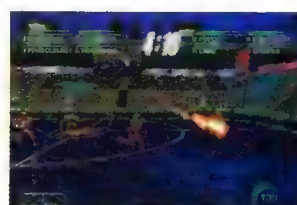
Score You Set

Whatever your taste in style, a management section has been included to allow you to create a team that suits you perfectly. Come up with a name and logo, select players, then give them face lifts to put together a bunch of Vinny Jones' or a group of David Ginolas'. The vital statistics of stamina, speed, power and accuracy can be altered, but increasing one



TWO TEAMS, EIGHT PLAYERS, ONE BALL AND BUCKET LOADS OF PAIN.

Release : MARCH
Company : PSYGNOSIS
Price : £44.95
Players : 1-16
Genre : SPORTS SIM



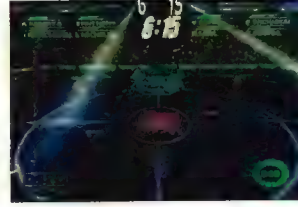
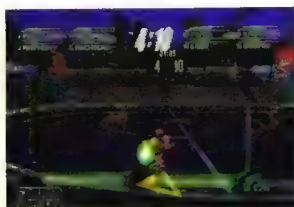
of ions and electrons, isn't made too clear.

Before either team can take a shot, the plasma must be charged up for two seconds in a special unit, which is centrally located in the opponents area. The ball will change colour, glowing pur-

ple or yellow to represent a home or away power charge, and it is then possible to score. If the other side then steals possession and successfully shoots before making their own recharge, an own goal will be awarded. Courts are split into zones of



Riot



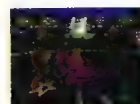
BRIEFCASES
FULL OF
MONEY AND A
WORLD WIDE
TELEVISION
AUDIENCE OF
BILLIONS HAVE
LURED PLAYERS
AWAY FROM
TRADITIONAL
FULL CONTACT
SPORTS.
ALTHOUGH A
RATHER DULL
GAME, RIOT
HAS APPAR-
ENTLY LED TO
THE COLLAPSE
OF BOXING,
BASKETBALL
AND ICE
HOCKEY.

will drop another. For those that don't want to mess about, 15 preset teams are instantly offered. Three modes of play are available in *Riot*: Friendly, which is a one off exhibition game; League, which is a full season of 30 games played both at home and away; Tournament, which is a knock out competition played over two, three or four rounds and can involve up to 16 players.

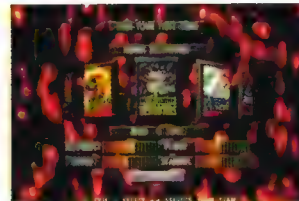
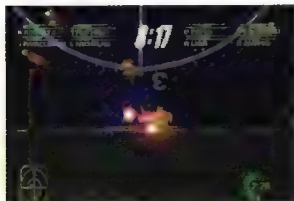
Getting out onto the court, what is immediately striking is the level of polish applied to the playing surface. This gives very convincing reflections of the quality seen in basketball games such as *NBA Live*. Apparently these waxed up surfaces also make movement difficult and improbable. Rather than a button which provides a

sprint option, *Riot* players build up speed by skidding along school boy type style. This proves more than a little imprecise and makes sudden stopping or changing direction almost impossible, hence opponents tend to dart past your defence leaving you wondering how to slam on the breaks. Difficulty in judging positions, unless you use a high over head camera angle, also adds to the number of near misses and level of swerving.

Graphics for individuals, the stadium and court are all well designed, glossy and pleasing to the eye, but playing the game isn't quite as satisfying. Moving the plasma ball around the court isn't complicated but it is still difficult to pass, shoot and tackle because the court is so



Opinion Knocking the hell out of opponents in a fast paced futuristic sports sim isn't a bad idea for a game, after all it has worked many times in the past. Unfortunately for *Riot*, these ghosts from the past, most notably the fantastic *Speedball* and *Speedball 2*, are far more satisfying. Controlling players as they skid around the shiny court floors is imprecise, tackling and taking possession of the ball is like playing tag, little incentive has been provided to make you come back for more and generally speaking there's not enough variety. If this were a standard sports sim it could be recommended to die hard fans, but it isn't so I don't really recommend it to anyone. JM



THE GOODIES

During the game, rather than chucking ten pence pieces or bottles at the players, the crowd throw power ups onto the court. Lasting just 15 seconds and confusingly similar in appearance to the plasma game ball, there are five types to collect:



SPEED UP

The Speed-up makes players manoeuvrability three times faster than usual.



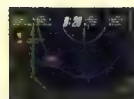
POWER PUNCH

As you would expect, the player gains thrice the normal punching power.



POWER SHOT

This allows the player to throw harder and faster, and turns the ball into a weapon.



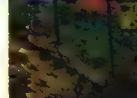
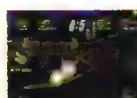
HEALTH

The Health power-up instantly restores players health to maximum level.



HAWKEYE

Hawks have incredible eyesight, and so do you when you grab this power-up.



cramped. Often matches are reduced to games of tags – a player will snatch control of the ball but is so close to an opponent that it is instantly grabbed back. Not conducive to flowing play.

WHERE'S THE RIGOR?

Considering that the accompanying storyline claims that today's most popular violent games have been replaced by *Riot*, causing serious damage to members of the opposition is rather tricky. Hang around long enough to land a few punches and the chances are someone will score in the meantime, try and put them on the deck and chances are the game will end before they drop. Loading screens tempt with loads of different brawls and battles, but character movements simply don't cater for this kind of fun.

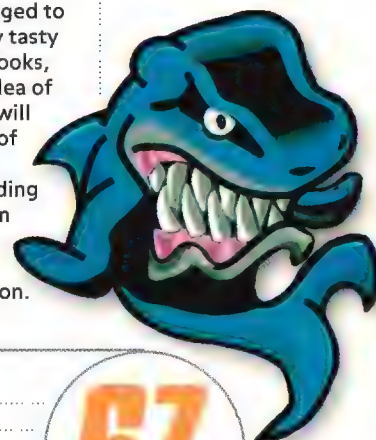


Limited gameplay, not enough violence, graphics lacking in variation and commentary that jangles the nerves all point to the need for a system of comprehensive team building to make the players want to come back for more. In this area too though, *Riot* runs out of steam. Winning league and tournament games add a little to the over all abilities of the team, but that's about it. No saving up credits to get your hands on version three power boots or super charged death gloves, just an increased team bar.

At the end of the day programmers have managed to make *Riot* graphically tasty and no doubt these looks, combined with the idea of gratuitous violence, will sell plenty of copies of the game. Although I'd recommend spending the asking price down at your roughest local, where you're sure to see more action.

PSP RATING

Graphics : 83
Animation : 80
Sound FX : 62
Music : 65
Lastability : 60
Playability : 68



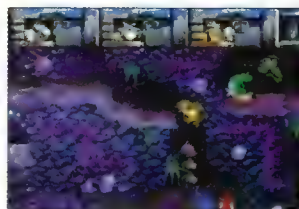
67

GAMERS FAMILIAR WITH THE ORIGINAL LOST VIKINGS WILL RECOGNISE THIS AS BALEOG THE FIERCE, NOW IN ALL HIS RENDERED GLORY, READY FOR THE PLAYSTATION.



Considering the PlayStation is supposed to be an icon of progress, *The Lost Vikings 2* is a rather disturbing step backwards. It's pretty much identical to the original Super Nintendo game, both technically and visually, so what difference has the five years between them made? Well, none, or at none that are immediately visible. *The Lost Vikings 2* could be, by all accounts, just the first game on the Sony machine – there's no evidence that the PlayStation's superior palette and lighting effects have been used, and the puzzles have remained pretty much identical in design and complexity. Disappointing.

All the characters are back too. Erik the Swift is once again joined by the aggressive Baleog the Fierce, and as usual fat boy Olaf the Stout follows up the rear. Even though five years has past they've barely aged though, and all three Vikings still have leathery skin and knee-length beards. They've got all the same skills too. Erik is

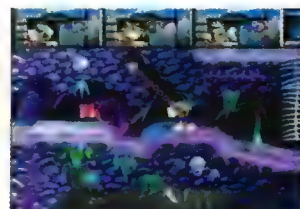
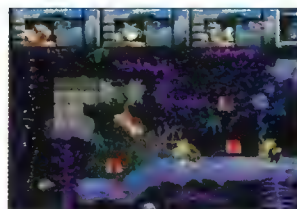


a sprinter who headbutts anything and every thing, Baleog hacks at enemies with a sword and Olaf... well, Olaf is just a fat git really.

So, after five years and the technological breakthrough that is the PlayStation, video games are no better off, at least when it comes to *The Lost Vikings 2*.

SAME AS EVER

Well, that's not strictly true. Admittedly the game does look remarkably similar to the Super Nintendo original, and remains faithful in terms of gameplay, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. *The Lost Vikings* was indeed a fantastic game, and many of the aspects which made it a 16bit classic are present in the sequel. It's a tremendously involving game, and it takes time to master each of the character's various skills and their uses, as well as learning to use the three Vikings as a team in order to solve the puzzles. However, the gameplay hasn't aged particular well, and as such *The Lost*



Vikings 2 feels all too dated.

This underlying fault is unfortunately alot more than just skin deep, and affects gameplay as well as good presentation – in fact it's rather like playing an old 16bit dinosaur as opposed to a brand new state-of-the-art video game, largely because the game doesn't really offer anything that the player hasn't already seen. The level designs are familiar, the puzzle structure has been seen before and because the Vikings perform in pretty much the same way, anyone who has played the first game will find the sequel just too damn easy.

PLAYING AWAY FROM HOME

The game starts with Olaf, Erik and Baleog aboard their Viking longboat. The first (and one of the very few) examples of the use of new technology is the rendered introduction sequence in which the terrible trio are unexpected teleported away from their homeland, kidnapped by the evil Tomator who wants revenge after the Vikings thwarted his plans at the end of the first game. Of course, all goes wrong and before long they've escaped from Tomator, but are thrown through time and end up in some distant land. With

Release : APRIL
Company : INTERPLAY
Price : £44.99
Players : 1-2
Genre : ARCADE



(LEFT) THE THREE VIKINGS ARE JOINED LATER IN THE GAME BY FANG, A WEREWOLF THAT ATTACKS WITH HIS TEETH, AND A FIRE BREATHING DRAGON NAMED SCORCH.

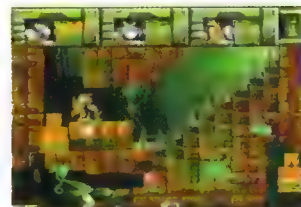
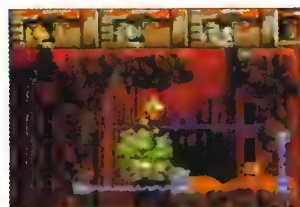
nothing but their wits about them, the Vikings must find a way to return back home before last orders are called.

The 'comical' plot runs throughout the game, with the Vikings calling upon the help of other characters, who promise to magically transport them back providing they find the ingredients needed for each the spell. Erik, Olaf and Baleog spend most of their time searching for mushrooms and bat wings then, and any other tat that could prove useful for getting them home. This involves learning how to get the most from each characters, using

the plot unwinds, the Vikings first meet a werewolf called Fang. Swiping at an opponent with razor sharp claws, Fang can also use his pointy paws to climb rocky walls. Scorch, on the other hand, is a dragon who breathes fire and has wings, which enable him to fly to areas that the other Vikings cannot reach.

NO KINGDOM FOR A LOOPER

But that's about it. Of course there are puzzles to solve – lots of them – but they're not particularly tricky, and because the game gradually introduces the various ele-



Erik to jump over gaps, relying on Baleog to take out any enemies and leaving Olaf to protect the entire team with his shield. The three Vikings have new abilities too, thanks to robotic equipment which they stole shortly before leaving Tomator's ship. Erik's rocket boots allow him to jump further, Baleog's bionic arm lashes out on the enemy and Olaf's shield has a miniaturising ray, which shrinks the porky Norseman to then allow him to squeeze through small gaps.

It's the two new characters that provide the most interest though. Befriended as

ments of the gameplay via information panels, there are very few problems that can't be overcome with a little practice. That's not to say *The Lost Vikings 2* is ridiculously easy though, because it isn't. The Vikings can only sustain three hits each before dying, and unfortunately a level cannot be successfully completed unless the entire team remains intact. This is often frustrating, struggling through to the very end of a stage only to sit and watch one of the Vikings die as they accidentally slip from a ledge and plummet to their doom. *The Lost Vikings 2* is incredi-

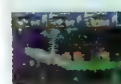
INTRODUCING THE BAND



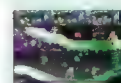
Baleog is the first to step into the limelight, to deal with the skeleton running riot on the ledge to the left. Using his bionic arms, Baleog punches ol' boney face to the ground.



Olaf is up next, climbing the nearby ladder and using his shield to drift across the chasm to the left. Once there, he uses the shield to shrink in size, allowing him to squeeze through the gap to get the silver key.



Key in hand, Olaf runs back through the gap and drops down to the right, and is joined by the rest of the band. Slotting the key into the hole, Olaf goes through the door and picks up the severed eye.



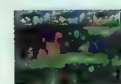
Baleog takes point, climbing down the ladder and waiting for the skeleton to turn around and plod back in his direction. When he gets close Baleog will then lash out with his bionic arm.



Erik's in the lead next, running ahead of the pack and leaping up on top of the ledge, using his rocket boots for an extra boost. He picks up the key, opens up the door and then let's the others through.



The fireball spitting pipe on the left will burn flesh to cinder in seconds, and must be blocked by Olaf's protective shield. While fat boy hides behind the hot metal, make sure the other two Vikings sneak past and clamber up the ladder.



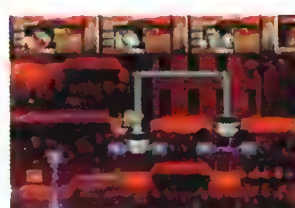
Olaf is in the hot seat again, having taken the gold key from Erik. Using the shield to shrink in size he crawls under the rocks, to reach the keyhole. This will then open the metal gate to the left.



With just one enemy left to bag, Baleog hacks with his blade and continues onto the end. Handing over the ingredients, the hobgoblin mixes the spell and soon the boys are off into the unknown.

Opinion Too similar to the 16bit original for its own good, *The Lost Vikings 2* not only looks particularly average, gameplay is both non-eventful and also lacks originality. The addition of extra characters and abilities increases interest for a while, but ultimately *The Lost Vikings 2* is a predictable, unimaginative and downright mediocre arcade adventure. **AS**

bly unforgiving in this way, and one tiny mistake can mean the difference between success and failure. Still, the difficulty does ensure the game isn't over too quickly, even if there are only just over thirty levels.

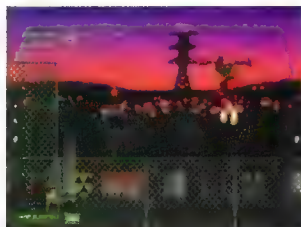


Overall though, it's difficult not to be disappointed by *The Lost Vikings 2*. It is too similar to the first game by far, and fails to breathe new life into what is essentially a dated game. True, the inclusion of a couple of new characters and a handful of abilities is interesting, but they don't really compensate for what *The Lost Vikings 2* lacks in excitement. A very average, run of the mill arcade adventure that unfortunately lacks the thrills and spills of 32bit gaming.

Graphics : 65
Animation : 60
Sound FX : 69
Music : 74
Lastability : 75
Playability : 82

63





omics have always looked to be a fertile breeding ground

for video game licences, super hero exploits being perfect material what with there constant fights, special powers and of course, big name licences. With the amount of super hero games which have been produced then, you would expect that most of them would be great, with at least one classic in there somewhere. Wrong. With a very few exceptions – such as *Marvel Super heroes* and *X-Men: Children of the Atom* – every single game based on a super hero licence released has simply been a crap cash-in. The 16-bit platforms were full of them left, right and centre, which simply had the hero (or heroes) involved in a 2D game which had a bit of jumping, hitting and shooting, accompanied

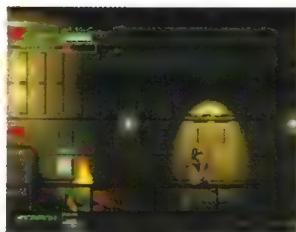
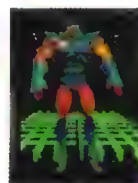
IRON MAN IS ONE OF THE FIRST MARVEL SUPERHEROES, AND ALONG WITH SPIDERMAN AND CAPTAIN AMERICA HAS RECENTLY UNDERGONE A REVAMP, MAKING THIS VERSION OF THE CHARACTER RATHER OUT-DATED.



Iron Man X-O Manowar In Heavy Metal

by bad graphics and even worse gameplay. The introduction of 32-bit gaming with the PlayStation had a lot of people excited at the idea of super hero licences which could be done properly, with the graphics and gameplay which broke the mould and did their heroes proud. The release of *Batman Forever* and *The Incredible Hulk* did nothing new, yet again great

heroes were reduced to simple scrolling fighting games. Well, now a new contender



has entered the fray, a team up between two armoured warrior heroes. It stars the well known Iron Man, and the er, lesser known X-O Manowar, and surprise surprise – it's a scrolling platform beat 'em up.

Release : OUT NOW
Company : ACCLAIM
Price : £44.99
Players : 1-2
Genre : BEAT 'EM UP

THE BEATING HEART

The first thing you have to do is choose which hero you want to be. The differences between the two armoured heroes aren't much more than cosmetic, apart from the fact that X-O has a block which replaces Iron Man's kick. If you are playing in two player mode, there isn't any need to worry if your mate has grabbed Iron Man before you. Both players can play the same hero, they just have slightly different colours on their costumes

that's all. Once that's out of the way you have a mission briefing to attend which outlines what you're getting into and what your objectives are, as well as what meanings you'll face on your way to the bosses. The bosses themselves are various super villains from the comics and look and sound tough enough to be worthy of the title. After you've read this – or more likely skipped through it – you're into the game itself. Unfortunately from here on it's downhill all the way.



Doom

The problems start with the graphics. The backgrounds look shoddy and the animation is just short of being laughably poor: X-O walks as if he has some serious arthritis in his shoulders that prevents his arms from touching the sides of his body, the result being that your hero walks like a zombie in a heavily starched shirt. Iron Man fares no better, mincing about when he walks before delivering a kick which seems to contain all of three frames of animation. After walking for a while they discover their first enemies which are quickly dispatched with a

X-O
MANOWAR IS A CHARACTER THAT YOU MAY NOT HAVE HEARD OF BUT IS WORTH LOOKING INTO. THIS ARMoured HERO HAS CURRENTLY BEEN REBORN COURTESY OF ACCLAIM COMICS. YET AGAIN IT BEARS LITTLE RESEMBLANCE TO THE CHARACTER YOU SEE HERE, BUT IF YOU EVER SEE THE COMIC, GET IT. IT'S MUCH BETTER THAN THE GAME.

ARMOURGEDDON

You have a number of attacks at your disposal as both Iron Man and X-O, who share some of the same attacks, but they have their differences as well. Here are some of your moves, although your shots can be increased by picking up power ups later on.

IRON MAN AND X-O

ENERGY BEAM

Your standard weapon, this has a rapid rate of fire and unlimited ammo. You can't walk and fire at the same time though. Some hero you are, eh?



PUNCH

A reasonably powerful move, but it lacks range and so is not often used. You won't usually get close enough to use it, so it's not worth bothering with.



THROW

Initiated by the grab move, this crushing manoeuvre will kill any average soldier in one go. But like the punch, it depends on you getting near enough.



UNIBEAM

Your smart bomb equivalent, this beam will clear the path of any weak enemies and cause major damage to strong ones. But be warned, they come in very short supply.



BACKGROUND FIRE

Double tapping up on the joystick and then pressing shoot allows you to fire into the background in order to destroy barrels and switches to help you in your missions.



IRON MAN ONLY

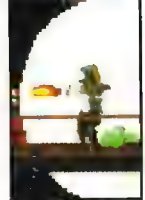
KICK

More powerful than the punch, but suffering from the same limitations. It's worth it just to see the terrible animation of which it ensues.



SPLIT FIRE

By double tapping down on the joystick shots can be fired left and right at the same time, handy for those difficult moments when you don't know which way to shoot.



X-O ONLY

GUARD

An extremely useful move, protecting you from most of the energy bolts fired at you and gives you vital breathing space.



SPIN PUNCH

With a double tap down and a press of the punch button, X-O spins and clears both sides of the opponents.



Opinion It's an insult to people's intelligence that there are companies that actually think that we'll buy this drivel. Substandard in every department, this is just the type of crap that used to be churned out, production line style, on the SNES in its darkest days. There are Spectrum games that offer much more playability than this, and some of them used to cost £1.99. Not even worth looking at to see how bad it is, this is a total waste of time.

DB

few energy bolts. Then there are some gun turrets to duck and shoot at before progressing to the first problem, a building blocking the way ahead. This is negotiated by jumping into the air and then pressing the jump button again to turn on your boot jets which allow you to hover in the air and negotiate the blockage, and many others which lie ahead. The power on your boots is not great, so you can only travel short distances before they cut out. The power does recharge quite quickly though so you

can try again if you missed the first time out. This addition to the standard jump, as well as the ability to aim your energy bolts up and down does little to add to the basic premise of the game. Iron Man is a simple scrolling platformer with a bit of shooting here, some punching there, a dash of jumping and so on. This not a game which is going to win any awards for originality, and unfortunately not for playability either. You see, apart from the gripes about the originality of it and the graphics not being that

great is the fact that this whole game just looks like another crap licence being done for the money, even though Iron Man isn't as big as say Spider Man. This just looks like an exercise in lazy by the numbers games development which begs the question that if you're going to do a game which is in a genre which has been done to death, then it has to have some reason to stand out from the pack. Iron Man doesn't. Its gameplay is repetitive and downright boring, it's been seen many

times before and it's certainly been done better. The only thing that the two player mode adds is an extra person to be bored by the game. If you've got 50 quid you want to spend and you're wanting some super hero action, buy a big pile of comics instead. They'll last longer than this game.

Graphics : 28
Animation : 30
Sound FX : 35
Music : 38
Lastability : 20
Playability : 28

22



Slapping enormous tyres, heavy duty suspension kits and meaty supercharged engines onto modest car bodies is an American obsession that reflects their ideology to build everything as big and brash as possible. Vehicles like Big Foot actually take on more of a persona than the owners or drivers, becoming stars in their own rights that draw huge crowds at events.

As most of these expensive toys don't appear capable of travelling faster than curb crawling speed, the obvious use for monster 4x4s has been vehicles of destruction.

Four wheel drive racing has in the past been left to more practical vehicles such as Land Rovers, but now the monsters have broken out and are about to be pitted against the bumpiest tracks imaginable. Strap yourself in for racing from hell courtesy of *Monster Trucks*.

Designed by Reflections, the team that brought both *Destruction Derby* games to the PlayStation, the philosophy of being as stupid as possible with cars which worked so well in these titles is also at the root of *Monster Trucks*. Forget about complex simulations that push concentra-

tion to the limit, the whole idea here is to have fun careering around over the top landscapes. To emphasise the silliness of the idea, one of the control buttons is used to sound blasts of a horn that serves only an aesthetic purpose.

Nine vehicles are available to suit various styles of driving and are based on a collection of recognisable cars and vans. Circuit racing consists of powering around a fully marked out track over three laps. The seven courses are surrounded by steep climbs and littered with jumps and drops which are tough on vehicles. If the wrong line is taken it's easy

to quickly trash most trucks so beginners should pick heavily armed transport.

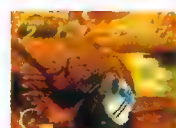
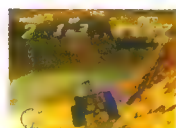
In contrast, endurance competition has a much more open environment and the idea is to navigate around a series of nine well spread out check points. This method of racing is not so difficult as it sounds because players are guided between gates by a large red directional arrow. Four locations play host to the mad cap racing, with each setting split into several stages.

All of the circuit and endurance racing courses have rough roads cut into the landscape and when getting to grips with controls it is essential to rigidly stick to these. Attempting short cuts is tricky with such unpredictable environments and errors mapping out new ground will inevitably drop you down to last place.

Damaging suspensions units



Release : APRIL
Company : PSYGNOSIS
Price : £44.95
Players : 1
Genre : RACING





is also surprisingly easy and even if a truck survives a nasty knock, handling will go right down the pan.

TRAIL FINDER

Practice and time trial modes offer the chance to work out possible short cuts. Finding a route that leaves your vehicle in one piece and offers real advantages over opponents comes down to dumb luck or hours of practice. More often than not a hopefully looking route will turn out to be lined with horrendous slopes and whilst your vehicle strains to get up the slopes, everyone else will be at the finish line. Unfortunately slow loading times in between bouts of car destroying make practising true off road motoring even more of an ordeal.

In the interests of completely mindless enjoyment, Reflection have also included a car crushing section. This pits two drivers against one another in a stadium filled with muddy jumps and rows of parked cars. The idea is to repeatedly drive at full pelt at humps, catch as much air as possible and land heavily on the roofs of these doomed saloons. During 60 seconds of carnage points are award-

ed by the judges and although the goal is simply to wreck, the criteria for scoring in this round is mysterious.

Once skill and knowledge of the courses start to come together you can test out your finely tuned abilities in a Championship. Beginning at the bottom class only a number one ranking at the end of a season is sufficient to move up into senior leagues. Three levels of difficulty can be selected and even in easy mode the opposition is competent.

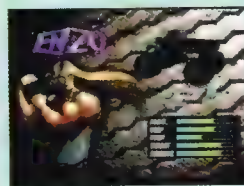
A SENSE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Reflections have managed to get part way to achieving their aim to supply a game that stands for no nonsense enjoyment. Racing over wild terrain with in car view selected can prove hilarious, at least for a short while. Jumps are generously provided for and attacked at maximum revs will send the cars almost into orbit. Graphics are generally good looking, if a little rough, and time has been spent adding touches like snow clinging to vehicles when racing in blizzards.

Like the original *Destruction Derby*, *Monster Trucks* is a game that sounds like great fun but just misses the mark due to the limited playability. Hazards such as streams of lava or extreme weather conditions add variety, but this doesn't really stop the gameplay becoming repetitive. No PlayStation

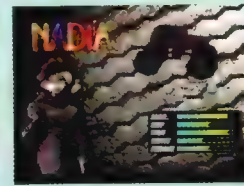
HEADLINE:

Each of the nine vehicles available in *Monster Trucks* is driven by an individual whose character is briefly described in the instruction manual. Rather than knowing that one driver speaks 14 languages or that another has interesting facial hair, what you really need to know is how the vehicles behave.



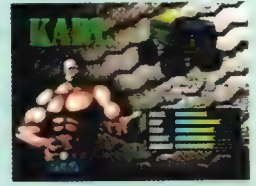
ENZO

This old Dodge pick up is a good choice for beginners, with strong bodywork and a reasonable engine.



NADIA

Very quick and great for hand break turns, Nadia's Jeep is light weight and should be handled with care.



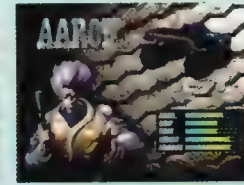
KARL

Yet another all rounder, the only factor that marks Karl's VW Camper out from the pack is good grip.



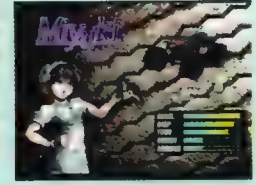
LEAN

An A Team truck that could do with a clean. Soggy handling and very heavy but surprising nimble.



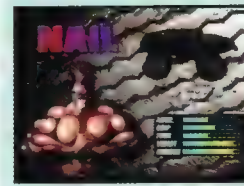
AARON

Dull looking which drives in a very similar fashion. Aaron excels at nothing so usually brings up the rear.



MIYUKI

Extreme speed without much in the way of protection, Miyuki's dune bug is easily trashed by wild jumps.



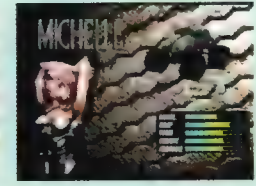
NAIL

Driven by all the Hollywood stars, the Humm-Vee is strong as a tank and manoeuvrable as a bus.



BEAR

Although Bear's choice of vehicles resembles a Lada, this truck is actually the best all rounder there is.



MICHELLE

Fantasy girl Michelle uses a love bug that doesn't have much guts and is geared toward steep climbs.

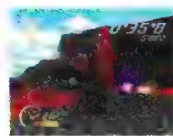
Opinion It is a great shame that *Monster Trucks* is let down by a few obvious short comings because, on paper at least, the intentions here were sound. If leaving the marked out roads had been made easier and more attention had gone into the graphics engine, this would have been easy to recommend. More enjoyable than *Hardcore 4x4*, if off road mayhem really appeals to your mentality and you can take the rough with the smooth, this game may satisfy. JM

owner should have to put up with scenery that dramatically pops up from nowhere, especially considering the way this problem has been licked by both *Destruction Derby 2* and *Rage Racer*.

PSP Rating...

Graphics : 86
Animation : 88
Sound FX : 70
Music : 75
Lastability : 81
Playability : 85

82



NFL Quarterback Club '97



WHILE THE ACTION CAM VIEW POINT IS INITIALLY SET UP TO LOOK DIRECTLY DOWN THE FIELD, IT CAN BE ALTERED TO TAKE AN ISOMETRIC LOOK AT THE PITCH SHOULD YOU DESIRE IT.



fter the continuous stream of football games, and the recent bunch of basketball efforts, the number of American football games on the PlayStation has begun to swell. Now while the title of best football/basketball/golf game is often being argued about, when it comes to games about the US's version of rugby there's one game that rules the roost – the

John Madden games. Ever since the days of the SNES and Megadrive the Madden games have been there with very little serious competition to threaten its place at the top of the tree. Now that it has made the transition onto the PSX the race to the top begins again. This time however there does seem to be some real competition to Madden. We've already had *NFL Gameday* from Sony and now here comes Acclaim's *NFL Quarterback '97* to have a go as well. Now while the qualities of other sports games may be more apparent – a tennis game, for instance, can only be so complex – American football has a huge amount of depth to it with its huge number of plays, options and teams. Of course it's also got to be simple enough for your average game player to pick up and play without too much hassle, and that's where the tricky quality of balance comes in.

CONTROLS

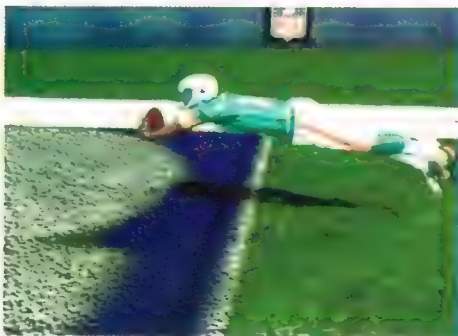
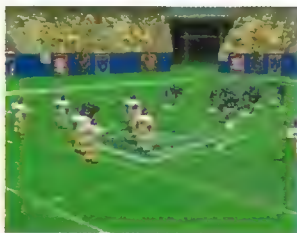
When you load up the game you're offered three different ways to play the game: Play, Quick Play and Simulation. While Play is the game proper, the latter pair are worthy of mention. Quick Play doesn't mess about with the whole business of options and choosing teams, it picks the sides for you and gets you right in the thick of

a one-off match straight away. Simulation on the other hand gives you the option to take part in some historical moments from past matches and Superbowls. Want to see if you can help the Dallas Cowboys come back in the last minute of a game in 1971 to beat the San Francisco 49ers? Then this is the place for you. There are 50 of these scenarios to work through, as well as the opportunity to create your own, offering a great deal of depth to the game. Play, though is what you'll select first and when you do you're immediately greeted with a huge amount of different competitions to enter. You have the option to play (deep breath) an exhibition match (which is perfect for the beginner), a season, the play-offs or the pro bowl, the latter being a match between two all-star teams. As well as this you can change the teams around thanks to a

trade players option. There is, as you may have guessed by now a comprehensive options screen which gives you a choice of four stadiums to play in, what the weather is like and even whether you'll be playing on astroturf or real grass!

GRAPHICS

Having worked your way through all these nicely presented setup screens it's onto the game itself. The first thing you notice is that the graphics aren't that great. They do the job, bless 'em, but the fact is, our grey box is capable of better than this and we all know it. The players are a blocky, badly animated bunch which takes your mind back immediately to those old Megadrive Madden games. This really isn't good enough since the only graphics that people really take notice of in a sports game are those of the players, so *NFL Quarterback*



I CAN SEE FOR MILES AND MILES...

As is becoming the case for all 32-bit sports games, there is a plethora of ways in which to watch the action unfold on the pitch. *Quarterback Club* certainly offers you plenty of these, most of which can be moved along the eight major points of the compass. If this isn't enough for you, you can even create your own personalised viewpoint.



ACTION CAM

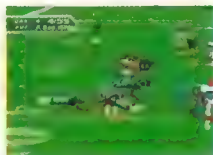
Your default view, which looks up the pitch from the attacking team's position and tracks the action (hence the name) as the ball is passed and carried up the pitch. This does the job well enough.

Release : OUT NOW
Company : ACCLAIM
Price : £39.99
Players : 1-8
Genre : SPORT

'97 isn't really off to a flying start. But that criticism aside, once you've got over that initial disappointment, there is some fun to be had here. The amount of plays you can choose from are very comprehensive, giving you a choice first of which formation you want your team in, followed by the yardage – which is the distance your players will spread across the pitch, depending on how far you're trying to take the ball offensively, or if you're defending, how far you think the other side are going to go – and finally the plays themselves. This gives you a huge number of strategies to choose from which – thanks to the yardage option – are flexible to your playing style and easy to pick up for the novice. Passes are executed by pressing the X button to highlight the receivers with the keypad symbols and then



Opinion American football games are, for the most part, pretty samey with only personal preference determining which one is best. *NFL Quarterback Day '97* offers some great features, in particular the historical scenarios option which gives you an angle on the game which will please the Statto's of the American football world. The graphics and feel of it really let it down though, and so I can only recommend it to those who are big fans of the sport who don't mind how blocky their teams look. **DB**



pressing the relevant button to send ball to that man, a system which has become the norm in PSX American football games. The camera views are plentiful (as you can see in the box out), but there is one problem for the single player, which is that whatever team is in possession of the ball is always at the bottom of the screen, the viewpoint adjusting whenever

possession switches over reversing your controls in the process. While this is of course the fairest way to play the game in multi-player mode (which lets you have up to eight players at once), for the single player this creates a great deal of disorientation. It also creates more than its fair share of annoyance, considering that with so many options in offer,

there isn't one to allow you to remain at the bottom of the screen. As to the playability of the game, it's pretty much the same as the other American football games out there at the moment, with regard to the actual mechanics and execution of the gameplay itself. The huge amount of options and in particular the historical scenarios give the game a huge life

span and will make die-hard fans of the sport very happy. Where the game falls down though is in the graphics. The players lack a feeling of weight and power, which is essential to any American football game and for some players this may put a few people off since the tackles lack that satisfying 'thud' when you take out the quarterback. All in all a good solid game, and apart from a couple of faults this could have been a real Madden beater, but for those who are deeply into the game and not concerned with visuals, this already might be.

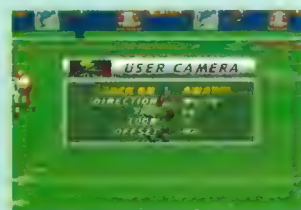


Graphics : 72
Animation : 69
Sound FX : 66
Music : 68
Lastability : 80
Playability : 75



PASS CAM

The Pass Cam is almost identical to the action cam except that it is set at a slightly lower angle to allow you to spot your receivers more clearly, but it doesn't make for a radical difference.



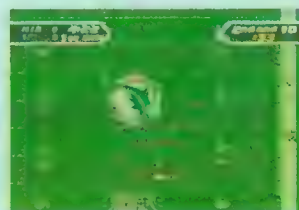
CREATE-A-CAM

If you can't find a view which suits you, then make your own with this option. You can have it lock onto the action or a specific player, as well as choosing the amount of zoom and tilt in the picture.



COACH CAM

This is a sideline viewpoint which zooms you in and out of the action as and when it happens, which can get a little disorientating but after you get used to it really isn't that bad at all.



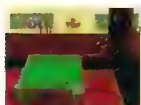
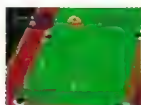
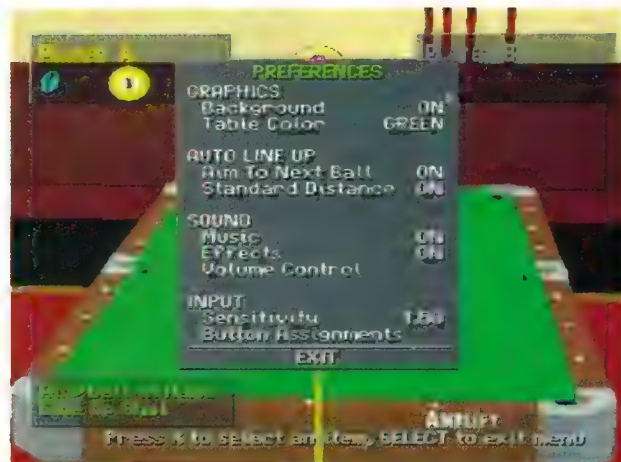
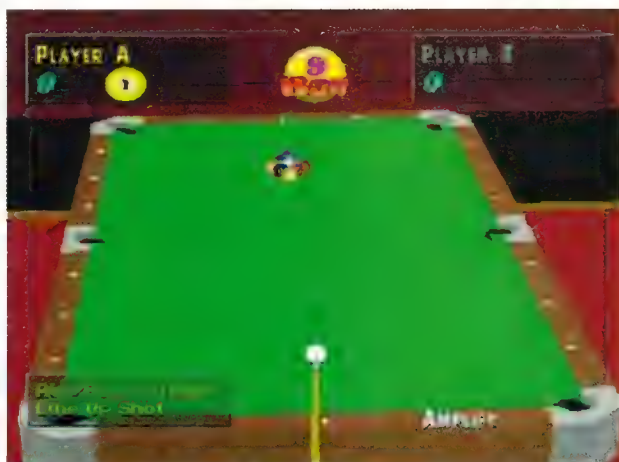
BLIMP CAM

As its name suggests, the Blimp Cam gives you an airship's eye view of the proceedings. Which looks impressive enough, but makes the players far too small to be of any use.

COWIE CAM

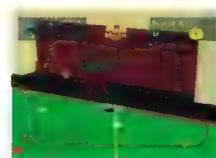
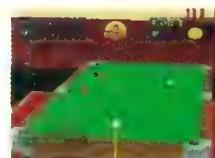
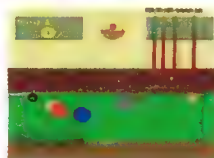
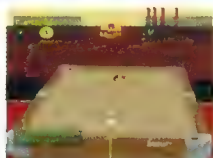
A random camera which chooses a different view for every play. This makes it practically impossible to work out what is going on and is therefore only useful as a novelty item.

Virtual Pool



 Give the PlayStation long enough and I'm sure that it will manage – eventually – to cover just about every sport you can think of. We started off obviously enough with an overload of football, basket ball and golf simulations, but as sales start to dwindle (as the punters find their favourites and stick with them) games developers appear to be looking to less obvious sports for their inspiration. Violent, futuristic sports have had their fair crack of the whip, and thanks to the PlayStation's hardware

Release : TBA
Company : INTERPLAY
Price : TBA
Players : 1-2
Genre : SPORT

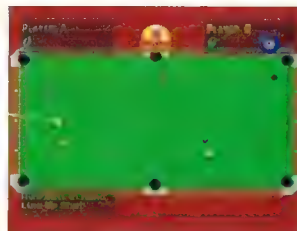
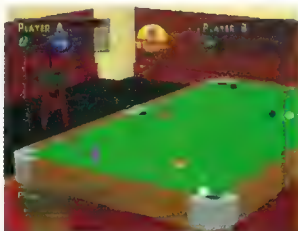


there's hardly been a shortage of various types of racing games. But now we need to slow down the metabolism for a while, pour ourselves a cool beer, and enjoy a nice civilised bit of table-top ball shuffling. Yes, the 3D pool tournament is finally about to begin...

NEW BALLS PLEASE

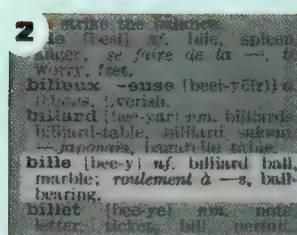
Avoiding the many hilarious 'sphere' gags that lurk around each corner, it's actually quite surprising to have gone so long without being bombarded with snooker and pool games for the PlayStation. They've always proved popular on machines

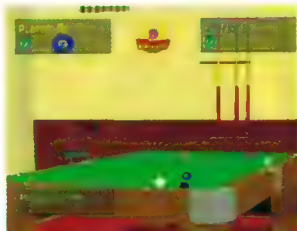
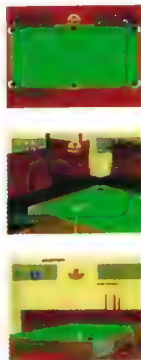
such as the PC and Amiga (need I mention the name Archer McLean?) and for the lazy enthusiast that likes a game but can't be bothered to drag themselves down the pub – it's an essential piece of equipment. But how do you make these things interesting and appealing to the public? Well, if Interplay are to be believed, the tactic appears to be to not try. There's no way to make pool anything more than a load of balls adhering to the laws of physics, so rather than attempt to add bells and whistles, just make sure that the balls adhere in *the* most



LOONY LEARNING

As well as the all-knowing, all-shooting Machine Gun Lou, Interplay have included an animated history of pool to amuse the punter, give a twisted version of the truth, and waste some time in the process. This is very silly indeed, and offers all the subtlety and indirect humour of a Terry Gilliam piece. Yes, someone's been watching too many old Monty Python tapes, and as a result you can enjoy lots of 'genuine' (ahem) drawings of, for instance, ancient Egyptians having a game of eight ball down the Red Lion. There's lots of heads falling off, archive picture mutilation and general mucking about. Good fun it is too! Unfortunately, it's hardly the sort of thing you'll come back to time and time again, but at least those nice Interplay-ers are making the effort!





realistic and accurate way. You don't go into a new pub and accept it if the balls start behaving as if they've unevenly weighted or appear to stop rolling before they've run out of energy, so why should you accept it in a computer simulation. I mean, that's why they use the word simulation in the first place, is it not.

Cue Action

So I've established that the balls *do* in fact appear to move as you'd expect them to on a real table, but what else is there to shout about? Well, how about the fact that the graphics system allows you to view the action from virtually anywhere inside the room. Zoom right out for an overview of the table, or zoom in and rotate the table to make sure that the five-winning shot is lined up correctly. A quick tap on the square button jumps you instantly to a pre-set table top position so that, should

you not want to watch a shot from the dramatic rolling camera's view, you can simply fill the screen with a 2D top-down view and keep track of all the balls on the table that way. As for taking the shots themselves, you simply line your cue up, hold down the 'X' button, and then pull back on the Dpad to gauge the shot's strength before whacking it forward to send the balls flying. Both simple to use and satisfying to crack. Oh, and did I mention that the balls move very realistically? I did? Oh good.

CHALKY CHOICE

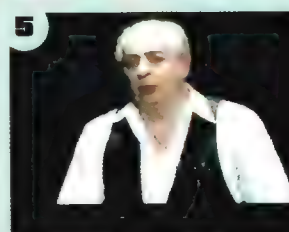
As well as offering the player all the obvious variations on play (ie eight-ball, nine-ball, straight pool, etc.) you can also 'build' your own table positions up and play that. You might also want to visit the game's in-house star, Machine Gun Lou, and play around with one of the many pre-set trick shots that have all been mapped out for you in both diagram form and FMV sequence. Simple things please simple minds I know, but it's just nice to see that Interplay have done their best to keep the player entertained (and should you *still* be bored, why not enjoy the weird and often wacky animated History of Pool!)

Ultimately, your appreciation for *Virtual Pool* will certainly hinge upon your appreciation for the real thing. It will also depend upon whether or not you have a human opponent to play against, simply because, no matter how clever the artificial intelligence is with a game like this, I can't help

BECAUSE YOU HAVE SUCH COMPLETE CONTROL OVER THE CAMERA VIEW AND ANGLE, IT'S ALWAYS POSSIBLE TO SEE EXACTLY WHAT'S GOING DOWN ON THE TABLE. LITERALLY.

MEET THE MAN

For the pool virgin or perhaps the player looking to leave the table with a foxy and suitably-impressed lady on their arm, Machine Gun Lou is your man. Captured in glorious FMV-O-Vision, Mr Gun (or Tommy to his friends) takes the player right through from the basic elements and simple shots of the game to dazzling trick shots. He dresses like you'd imagine John Travolta's dad does, looks like he'd kill you if you got in his way, and knows a thing or two about balls. A nice inclusion to the proceedings none the less.



Opinion A game such as this is always going to rely on two things: firstly, how accurate the movement of the balls is in comparison to what you think you've initiated, and secondly, how realistic and believable the movement of the balls on the table is. Fortunately for *Virtual Pool*, it's pretty much spot on in both departments. It's hardly the sort of game to set the world on fire, but it achieves all that it sets out to do. It does take a while to find a perspective that gives you a really honest 'feel' for what's going on around the table, but after a short 'settling in' period you'll be recreating all those classic pub-impressing shots. Very tidy indeed. PM

but think that, if the computer really put some 'thought' into it, it could make *any* shot – and it just misses occasionally to make me feel better! And so there you are. We find ourselves dealing with an extremely competent bit of software that, and while hardly likely to make a great impression on the PlayStation market, it will certainly satisfy pool fans. It's also pretty good fun if

you've rolled in from the pub and fancy a laugh with a mate. But I think I'll leave that for you lot to discover for yourselves...

PSP Review

Graphics : 84
Animation : 82
Sound/FX : 75
Music : 86
Lastability : 83
Playability : 85

85



1n the search for new ways to exploit the already over-saturated racing genre, developers are having to come up with more and more original ideas to stay ahead of the pack. Psygnosis' *WipEout* games prove that a new approach, when coupled with superior gameplay can make for a brilliant game (as well as huge sales). Now developers SingleTrac, creators of *Twisted Metal* and *Warhawk* are attempting to do the same thing with their new game *Jet Rider*. The twist this time is that the vehicles are a hybrid of *WipEout* craft, motorcross bikes and jet skis (the bucolic craft which ride in water). This resulting hover bike allows the player to ride on both land and sea, this, coupled with their manoeuvrability, means that they can pull off some incredible moves and tight turns. *Jet Rider* has ten tracks for you to test out your skills on, ranging over many different types of terrain. From a simple seaside affair to densely wooded swamp land and glacial ice tracks, they are all filled with so many obstacles it would be a miracle if you could get round once without falling off.

MOTOR BIKES

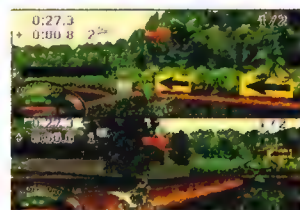
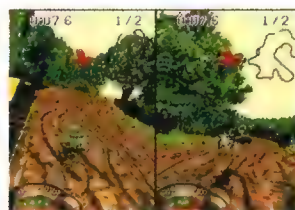
This of course is highly dependent on the bike which you choose to race with, since it's performance can vary greatly. There are twenty bikes to choose from, each with varying attributes. They are measured in four categories: the self explanatory handling and acceleration, mass, (which determines not only how likely you will fall off in the event of a collision, but if anyone else will if they run into you) and lift, the height your bike will rise when you hit ramps. The standard dilemma then applies; should you go for a



Jet Rider

manoeuvrable light bike, or a sturdy one which turns like an elephant? Of course the ideal bike will also depend on your strategy and the tracks which you are racing on, since there are many subtle deviations that can be made to your route during the race.

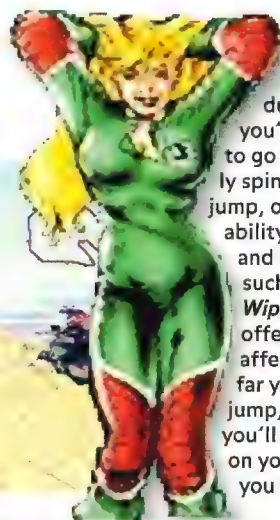
This use of shortcuts, coupled with the ability to ride on many different terrains (and thus pull off some mad stunts in your pursuit of first place) is the one quality which sets *Jet Rider* apart from other, more linear racing games. The shortcut in the Blackwater Falls track is worthy of note, since it entails you crashing through



one door of a house and out the other side just to allow you to cut a corner! It's these kind of touches that make *Jet Rider* a game which initially grabs your attention because it's trying to do something different with the racing genre. It's similar to what SingleTrac did in

Twisted Metal, putting in the sort of features and little tricks that most games players would want if they were designing their own game.

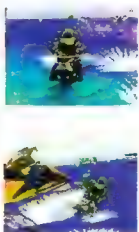
There's plenty of these as well, such as the ability to create your own shortcuts during a level if you've got the guts to go for a particularly spine-shattering jump, or the bike's ability to tilt forward and backward to such an extent (that *WipEout* never offered) that it can affect not only how far you fly on a jump, but whether you'll still be sitting on your bike when you land.



THERE'S PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR A TUMBLE FROM YOUR BIKE AS YOU TEAR AROUND THE COURSES. FROM HITTING POSTS AND BRIDGES TO PLAIN OLD FASHIONED FALLING OFF ICY CLIFFS!



Release : MARCH
Company : SONY
Price : £44.99
Players : 1-2
Genre : RACING



WITH MANY TURNS, JUMPS AND CHANGES IN ENVIRONMENT, THE TRACKS ARE CERTAINLY THE STARS OF THE GAME. HOWEVER THE FIRST TRACKS THAT YOU ACCESS ARE NOT NECESSARILY THE EASIEST ONES. HERE ARE A FEW OF THE TRACKS YOU'LL BE FACING.



TORTUOUS TERRAIN

JOYRIDE



A real beginner's course, this gives you a relatively easy introduction to the game by racing over sandy beaches, ocean waves and broken bridges.

BLACKWATER FALLS



Home of the infamous 'driving through the house shortcut' this track is so full of trees and drops you'll be drinking swamp water before you know it.

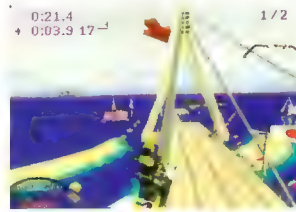
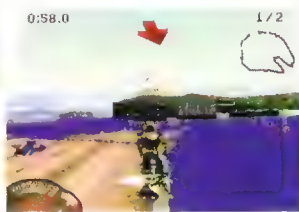
SUICIDE SWAMP



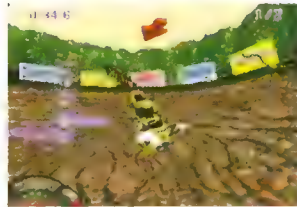
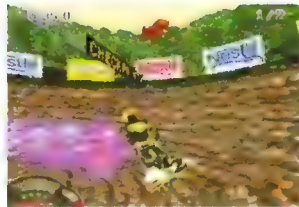
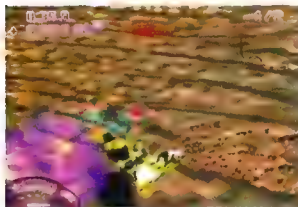
This is the first suicide course you will come across. Sending the riders in a figure of eight which will put you in the path of people coming the other way!

MORE GRAPPLES THAN WWE

Another new idea, used to make some of the tightest turns easier to handle, is the grapple. This is a beam of energy which latches onto particular poles scattered around the circuit. This aids in carrying you around the corner in much the same way as the Batmobile's grappling hook in the Batman film. Used properly it can create a slingshot effect whereby you increase your momentum and launch yourself out of the corner and into the lead. More often it results in you smacking both bike and hapless rider into the side of the track, so it must be learnt with care. This can't be used



playing the in-game graphics are something else altogether. They're scruffy and just downright awful with some very ropey animation, and for a racing game these days that's bad enough, but if you can back it up with good gameplay then at least you're getting somewhere. However since the lack of decent visuals makes it difficult to see just what is going on at some times, and appalling to look



all the time though, because it comes with a rechargeable energy supply, so you've got to learn which corners you need assistance with and plan accordingly. This gives an extra element of strategy to the game, which along with the careful management of the amount of turbos you've been allocated (you get four per level) makes each lap not only a test of your co-ordination and reflexes, but also of your brain as well.

PANICS

This all sounds good enough, but sadly it doesn't make for a good game. Why? Well mainly because of the graphics. While the title, character and trophy screens all look superb thanks to some great comic art, once you start

at others, it makes a severe impact. This is compounded of course in the smaller screened two player mode, and while the choice of horizontal or vertical split is a welcome one, it doesn't make any difference if you can't see anything through either of them.

The other problem is the distinct lack of playability. The tracks are frustrating in the extreme, making you fall off so many times as to create a nightmare and not a challenge. The standard problem of 'I'm in first place, I fall off just once and immediately I'm at the back of the pack' is so prevalent here that it will cause more incidents of joypads thrown through television screens than any repairman would like to predict. There are a

Opinion In a world filled with great graphics and no gameplay, *Jet Rider* manages to have some nice ideas and look awful. It's a real shame because there could actually be a mighty fine game here, but it's sadly been ruined by bad implantation. Your money is best spent elsewhere. DB

ONCE ONE OF THE PLAYERS HAS FINISHED IN A TWO PLAYER RACE, THEIR HALF OF THE SCREEN IS USED AS AN EXTRA CAMERA VIEW FOR THE RUNNER-UP. A SMALL CONSOLATION, BUT STILL A VERY NICE TOUCH.



Probably one of the most frustrating courses in the game, the Ice Crusher has many gaps which will catch the unwary Jet Rider, so drive carefully.

This is the second suicide course, this time set on a broken bridge which will allow you to make some huge leaps in order to avoid the oncoming traffic.

This is a race around some very twisting cliff side roads, ending in a hairpin turn sending your bike onto the rocks below. Use of the grapple is a necessity.

lot of great ideas here, but unfortunately they have been implemented so badly as to make a product which is at times almost totally unplayable. If SingleTrac had put as much effort into the graphics and gameplay as they had into the many smaller features, (including the music, which is superb) then they could certainly have had a classic on their hands. As it is, this is merely a title to be avoided.

PSP Rating...
 Graphics : 63
 Animation : 62
 Sound FX : 65
 Music : 85
 Lastability : 56
 Playability : 58

63

Hot Stuff!

Doncaster-based peripherals company, **Fire International Ltd.**, are newcomers to the PlayStation market, but have created a new Blaze label specifically for the Sony machine. Their 80 slot Memory Card was reviewed last month, and was immediately followed by a number of controller and cable options. Their new releases include a variety of controllers, and alternatives to existing Sony peripherals, all of which are slightly cheaper than the official versions. All the following peripherals are available directly from Fire, 4-5 Buttercross Court, Northgate, Tickhill, doncaster, DN11 9HY, or through most retail outlets. Fire can also be contacted on 01302 751428.



(CLOCKWISE FROM THE TOP) PRO ARCADE JOYSTICK (£29.99). A SPECIALISED JOYSTICK, PARTICULARLY SUITED FOR STREET FIGHTER-STYLE GAMES. THE BUTTONS ARE LARGE, AND THE UNIT ALSO SUPPORTS SLOW MOTION AND AUTO-FIRE MODES, BUT THE ACTUAL STICK HAS TOO MUCH TRAVEL AND IS TOO LOOSE FOR THE INTRICATE PATTERNS NEEDED FOR CAPCOM'S GAME AND ITS ILC (★★). X-TENDER (£4.99). A SIMPLE DEVICE TO EXTEND THE LENGTH OF YOUR JOYPAD LEADS. ONE END SLOTS INTO THE PLAYSTATION, WHILE THE JOYPAD CABLE SLOTS INTO THE OTHER END. USEFUL, AND AFFORDABLE (★★★★). SCART CABLE (£12.99) A CHEAPER ALTERNATIVE TO THE SONY VERSION, AND IT SEEMS VERY BIT AS GOOD TO US. A GOOD SOLID CABLE, AND VERY HARD-WEARING (★★★★). SYSTEM LINK (£12.99). LIKE THE SCART CABLE, THE SERIAL LEAD IS EVERY BIT AS GOOD AS THE SONY VERSION, AND IS A MORE THAN WORTHWHILE ALTERNATIVE (★★★★). MEMORY CARD (£19.99). NOT AS IMPRESSIVE AS THE 80 SLOT CARD (WHICH IS TO BE TRUMPED BY A 32MEG VERSION SOON), BUT SLIGHTLY CHEAPER THAN THE SONY EQUIVALENT, AND EVERY BIT AS RELIABLE (★★★★). AVENGER LIGHT GUN (£19.99). LIGHTER THAN THE REST AVAILABLE, AND VERY SIMPLE IN DESIGN. HOWEVER, THE GUN IS ACCURATE BUT LEFT-HANDED PEOPLE MAY FIND THE POSITIONING OF THE 'SMART' BUTTON A TRIFLE FRUSTRATING. WE'RE STICKING WITH KONAMI'S VERSION (★★). VRF1 (£49.99) A STRANGE VARIANT OF PAST STEERING WHEEL DEVICES, WHICH IS INCREDIBLY ROBUST, BUT CUMBERSOME TO USE. THE UNIT IS HEAVY, BUT CONTROL OVER THE SPRITES IS LIMITED BY THE TURNING ANGLE, AND THE LESS THAN FLOWING TURNING CURVE THE UNIT ALLOWS (★★). FINALLY, BLAZE HAVE RELEASED A NUMBER OF COLOURED PLAYSTATION PADS (£19.99) AVAILABLE IN A NUMBER OF COLOURED OR TRANSPARENT PLASTICS, AND ALL OF WHICH ARE MORE THAN SERVICEABLE (★★).



PERIPHERALS

ALL SCORES
ARE MARKED
OUT OF FIVE
STARS.



MORE ITEMS OF **MERCHANDISE** CURRENTLY AVAILABLE WITH ALL THE LATEST BOOKS, VIDEOS AND RELATED CDS THAT WE BELIEVE WILL BE OF INTEREST TO **PLAYSTATION GAMERS** EVERYWHERE.

MARS ATTACKS
FEVER GRIPS
THE MEDIA
PAGES AS THE
FIRST
BEHIND-THE-SCENES BOOK OF
TIM BURTON'S
EAGERLY
-AWAITED FILM
HITS THE
SHELVES. IN
THE MEANTIME,
TITAN'S
INCREDIBLE
RELEASE
SCHEDULE
GOES UP
ANOTHER GEAR,
AND THE SERIES
WHICH
SPAWNED
INDEPENDENCE
DAY MAKES A
WELCOME
VIDEO COME-
BACK.

BOOKS

STAR TREK: PHASE II - THE LOST SERIES

PRICE: £5.99

RELEASED BY: POCKET BOOKS

RATING: ★★★★★

What exactly is this legendary 'lost series' of Star Trek? Well, before Star Trek: The Motion Picture created the massive franchise, Gene Roddenberry, the show's creator had tried to get a new TV show off the round in 1975/76. This was Star Trek - Phase II and through a series of very trying and frustrating circumstances, it never happened and it became that first movie. Certain elements were retained (Kirk as an Admiral, the characters of Decker and Ilia) but other things vanished, not least a rather interesting Vulcan Spock-replacement called Xon. This fantastic book details all the episodes that were written (reprinting a couple of complete scripts in the process), a series of pre-production sketches of ships, weapons, sets and devices which actually reflect The Motion Picture more and more as the

events move chronologically along. One of the reprinted scripts is called In Thy Image, which would act as the opener, reintroducing the familiar characters (but no Spock, hence Xon) as well as the new guys Decker and Ilia, as well as the refurbished Enterprise. It is very similar indeed to the story of The Motion Picture, but the differences are very interesting. When you come away from ploughing through this book, you really will feel that it's a bit of a shame we didn't get to see this series. Some of the subsequent episodes are a bit hokey (a couple later turned up on Star Trek: The Next Generation when they were either desperate or suffering a

writers' strike) but overall, the series looks like it would have contained the charm of the Sixties' original with the glitz that ten years on became Star Trek: The Next Generation. The book shelves in shops are, frankly, overflowing with books on the Star Trek phenomena, but this one has a unique subject matter which means it ought to stand out as a good purchase. It certainly deserves to be a winner.

MARS ATTACKS - THE ART OF THE MOVIE

PRICE: £17.99

BY: TITAN BOOKS

RATING: ★★★★★

The film everyone is talking about (not least because despite being created by Tim Burton, it hasn't exactly set the world alight in America), and looking at the pictures herein, it's easy to see why. Having not had the pleasure of seeing the movie yet, the book prods me further towards the undoubtedly long queue that will form outside my local fleapit when it arrives. The star studded cast, the aliens themselves the (very) black humour - it's quite easy to see from the pictures why the Americans are less-than enthusiastic about the movie. Firstly it doesn't portray them in a particularly good light (everyone has varying degrees of stupidity and get what they deserve) and secondly, it is quite bleak. The aliens are a marvellous looking creation however, and one of the most diverting parts of the book is the section on the creation of the different facial expressions for them. There are a wealth of behind-the-scenes photos showing how the effects were done, with before-and-after shots of Congress etc, although it does spoil a few of the plot details. Then again, this isn't

the sort of book that you will really want to read until after you've been to the flicks anyway, so that shouldn't matter too much. The only downside to this whole thing is the outrageous price - eighteen quid for the book is very steep - and the glossy colour pages could be downgraded a little if it would bring the price down. In this post-Christmas period where people stop spending silly money, I fear Titan might not get the return on this which they really deserve as this is a wonderful record of the movie, but that price could well put folks off.

HITMAN

PRICE: £6.99

RELEASED BY: TITAN BOOKS

RATING: ★★★★★

All is not well in Gotham City. As Batman is elsewhere fighting crime, visitors from another dimension are scrapping it out in the dirty city streets. When hitman, Tommy Monaghan's latest job is killed by one such demon the wound is infected with some of the beast's powers, and Monaghan finds himself with X-ray vision - a most useful asset for

his career. Tommy's earnings naturally boom as his extra powers allow him an unprecedented advantage over his victims, but his progress is being watched by out-world eyes. And when Tommy crosses swords with Batman and a hit on The Joker is offered, our unlikely hero finds himself against even more powerful adversaries. Part of the DC Bloodline series, Hitman is fast-paced story, mixing Batman elements with the darker side of Gotham City. Tommy is a less than sympathetic hero, but his struggling with his powers is well realised, and the final set-up in Arkham Asylum gripping. Some of the art leaves a lot to be desired, though, but the promise for an on-going series is apparent.

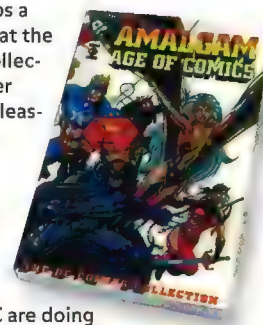
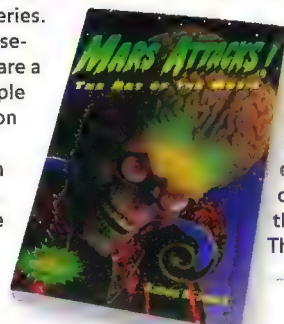
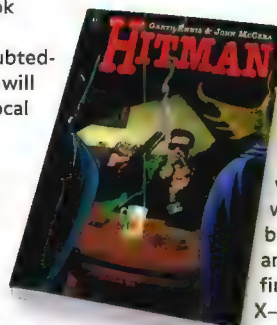
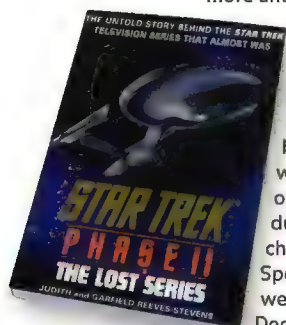
THE AMALGAM AGE OF COMICS

PRICE: £9.99

RELEASED BY: TITAN BOOKS

RATING: ★★★★★

Well, I promised a brief look at this follow up to last issue's review of the Boxtree/Marvel half of this imaginative crossover-with-a-twist from Marvel and DC. This Titan edition retails at a quid less than Boxtree's, but the quality of stories are perhaps a tad less as well. Super Soldier, an amalgam of Marvel's Captain America and DC's Superman is the highlight of the bunch, possibly the whole shebang in fact, whereas Dark Claw (Wolverine/Batman) is lame to the nth degree, simply because it tries too hard to merge too very disparate characters. Dr Strange Fate is quite weird and is perhaps the only one which relies a bit too heavily on a knowledge of the original creations (Dr Strange/Dr Fate) to work. The JLX (Justice League/X-Men) is full of clever characters in search of a story and Assassins (Catwoman meets Elektra & Domino) is just lame as too many elements are forcibly squeezed into such a short story. The Amazon story (Storm/Wonder Woman) however is excellent, although John Byrne - possibly deliberately - has made his artwork look as it did in the mid-Seventies. This is very nice and clean, perhaps a statement that the rest of the collection are rather dark and unpleasant, whereas Amazon is a straightforward good, heroic story. The great news is that Marvel & DC are doing it again later in '97, using some of these characters and creating a bunch more. Rarely do inter-company crossovers work as anything other than poorly executed commercial fiascos, but the twist of taking the two concepts and shaping a wholly new third is refreshing and, above all, fun.



VIDEOS BATMAN - BATMAN

PRICE: £7.99
RELEASED BY: WARNER BROS
VIDEO
RATING: ★★★★★

After last month's tedious Poison Ivy duo, these two adventures are nothing short of magnificent, using the medium of cartoon to do what could never be achieved in live action. In 'Dreams in Darkness', the Scarecrow creates a gas that brings peoples deepest fears to the surface. As Batman becomes a victim, his dreams are both surreal and nightmarish, witnessing his parents' death as the landscape turns into a revolver, and later as a rat turns into various past foes (the Poison Ivy cameo being far more worthwhile than either of last month's tales). With Batman incarcerated in Arkham Asylum, trying to prove that he isn't crazy and then lapsing into these tormented dreams, the whole story is a wonderful work of art. Equally impressive is Beware the Gray Ghost, a pastiche on super heroic TV shows, featuring Adam West as the Ghost - West was of course Batman/Bruce Wayne in the Sixties live-action Batman TV show. Someone is reusing themes from old Gray Ghost episodes to commit crimes and Bats is stumped, so he drags the Gray Ghost actor out of retirement (Simon Templeton). The story is very witty but anyone who has ever considered themselves the sort of fan of anything to the extent that they buy plastic figures or videos of old shows (yes, I put my hand up to these crimes) can do little but cringe at the honesty of the premise. And Doctor Who fans will certainly sympathise as the film collectors' sadness that so many episodes of the Gray Ghost have been lost forever. A wonderful collection and well worth the investment.

V: PARTS 1 AND 2

PRICE: £9.99 EACH
RELEASED BY: BEYOND VISION
RATING: ★★★

Huge Flying Saucers land above Earth's major cities, and is the forerunner to an alien race's invasion of our little blue planet (sound familiar). No, it's not

Independence Day, instead it's one of the most fondly-regarded sci-fi series of yesteryear: V. V aired on several ITV regions over ten years ago, and stars eternal direct-to-video stars Marc Singer and Michael Ironside (and Lane Smith from TV's New Superman) in an



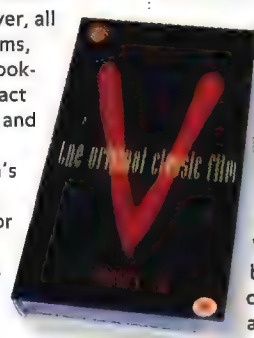
on-going attempt to eliminate the alien menace. Beyond Vision are planning to release the series in affordable chunks, and the series starts off well with the alien ships arriving, and offering solutions to many of Earth's

problems. However, all is not what it seems, and the normal-looking aliens are in fact reptilian in form, and are planning to remove the Earth's water to create a planet suitable for colonisation. Enter TV camera-man Singer as the main hero, along with a group of every day people who are eventually banded together into resistance group or a traitorous upper class as the reptiles begin a martial law-style conquest of Earth. V: Parts 1 and 2 are the pilot episodes which started the series, and they are every bit as enjoyable now as they were in the 80s. However, as the series drags into 'The Final Battle' tapes the idea becomes a bit stretched, with the once defeated aliens returning in a soap opera affair or strange children and continual defeats for the resistance. Enjoy the first tape as a one off because what follows is well below par.

ERASER

PRICE: RENTAL
RELEASED BY: WARNER
RATING: ★★

Poor, poor Arnold Schwarzenegger. There was a time when everything he touched turned to gold. Total Recall, the Terminator films, The Running Man, and True Lies helped steer Arnie to his position as 'premier action star' sweeping away poor Stallone with ease. Then,



however, paying no attention to Stallone's failure at entering the comedy market, Arnie attempted the same career path with the dreadful Twins and Kindergarten Cop. After that, it was proved that even the mightiest of actors was fallible, and when the incredibly expensive Last Action Hero proved a flop, it was wondered if he could bounce back. Well, after watching Eraser, it becomes apparent that the success of True Lies was but a temporary rise in quality. Eraser is 'Arnie by numbers'. He plays a special agent who 'erases' people on behalf of the government protection scheme. As such, he fakes their deaths, gives them new identities and fades away. However, when his

boss is revealed to be dabbling with gun running, Arnie finds himself using all his skills to evade being erased. Throw in the obligatory Arnie love interest (Vanessa Williams as a very bland assistant), and a couple of excellent action set-pieces and you have a film which

was always going to end in a huge explosion. Eraser, is a humourless affair and while it is an adequate way to kill 90 minutes, it is far from Arnie's finest hour. T3 beckons, methinks...

DOCTOR WHO - THE AWAKENING/FRONTIOS

PRICE: £16.99
RELEASED BY: BBC VIDEO
RATING: ★★★★★

The Awakening sees something rumbling away under a village church which has a quite nasty effect on the villagers who are having one of those pageants where they recreate a famous battle from the Civil War. Before you can say 'Charles in the tree' the Roundheads and Royalists are at each others' throats, people from the genuine time period pop up and someone who used to be a Liver Bird seems to be the only one unaffected by the whole

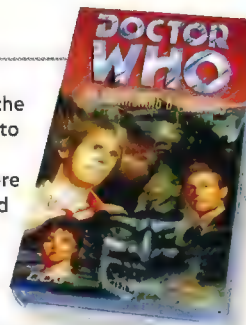
thing - which is just as well as she teams up with the Doctor to stop it all, while his normal companions are imprisoned by the mad local JP (nothing unusual there) or sent to be burned at the stake as the May

Queen. Frontios shifts the focus totally, taking us to the far future and an Earth colony world where people are being sucked to their death's underground while the colony is being bombarded from space. Responsible for this are one of Doctor Who's less fear-inducing monsters, the Tractators who are fine so long as they don't move. But one flimsy wave of a paw or a shuffle forward and you realise you could run away quite easily. Frontios also contains one of the show's more yukky moments when a machine is unveiled by the monsters, powered by the dismembered limbs and heads of those colonists who vanished. Let down by being made entirely in an unconvincing studio (honestly, a gravel pit in Dorset would have been better, for once) this is quite a good set to watch on a rainy Saturday and evoke memories of your childhood.

FAIR GAME

PRICE: £10.99
RELEASED BY: WARNER HOME
VIDEO
RATING: ★★★

No one makes action films like Joel Silver. From Lethal Weapon, through to The Last Boy Scout and Batman Forever, his knack for producing the best of the genre is renowned. Fair Game is another cracker from the Silver stable, with the man himself producing as William Baldwin and Cindy Crawford are pitted together in another take on the 'buddy' movie. Crawford's role casts her as lawyer Kate McQueen who is inexplicably being hunted by assassins. Enter Baldwin as Max Kirkpatrick, yet another maverick cop, and following a handful of explosions, the pair go on the run, pursued by eternal bad guy Steven Berkoff and his many underlings. Fair Game follows a set pattern of decution and second guessing, but the film rolls along at such high pace its hard not to be caught up in the action. The car chases manage new ideas, and Crawford is more than adequate as the hard-nosed Lawyer - especially since most people went to see the film because she eventually gets her kit off. Fair Game wasn't a huge success when released, but it is perfect video fare and one of the best action films of the last eighteen months. Eraser take note.



Plus Points

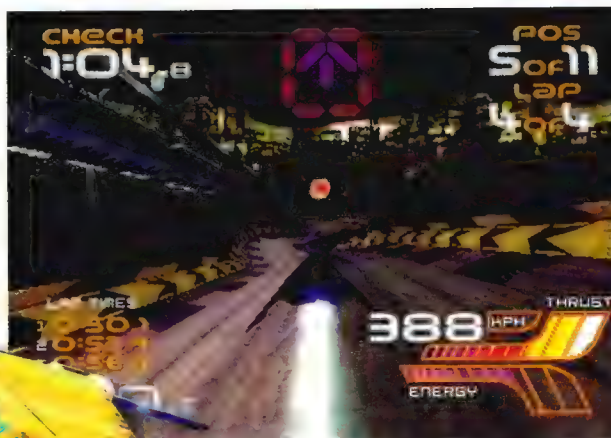
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MOTION SICKNESS

I am writing to reply to your request for information from anyone who has suffered negative side effects as a result from playing on the PlayStation. I am afraid that I have had some problems earlier this year after I traded in my Megadrive for a PlayStation. With the machine, I also received *Doom*, *Descent* and *PGA Golf*. Within five minutes of playing *Doom* I felt myself break out in a sweat and felt rather disorientated, I continued playing for about half an hour but finally had to give up as I felt so ill and I was unwell for a full 24 hours afterwards. I suffered similarly with *Descent*, but had no problems with *PGA Golf*. Needless to say, I got rid of *Doom* and *Descent* forthwith. Although since then I have played and had side effects from *Ridge Racer Revolution* and *WipeOut*.

I have never had a problem with the Megadrive and have come to the conclusion that these games are giving me motion sickness (possibly similar to that which navigators can suffer from in cars when trying to read maps during rallies) This is a real problem as I have to try out rental games first before buying and have to stick to games with less movement involved. I must emphasise that I have never experienced this problem before and I am not epileptic. I am over forty years old and enjoy my PlayStation tremendously but it seems that I will have to stick to strategy and slow moving games in the future. Bill Howie, Aberdeen

This is a very rare complaint, but one that the majority of software houses are aware of in a round about way. Shortly after the epilepsy furore a few years back, software houses



agreed to place a warning in every box that the games can affect some

people. By the sounds of things it is only the faster games which affect you (and the Megadrive couldn't handle such scrolling techniques which could explain why you are suffering now), which is a real pity as this what the PlayStation does best. There are glasses available which deflect rays from the screen which could help, or perhaps sitting further back from the screen, but as to what else to suggest we're at a loss I'm afraid. Try consulting your GP to see if he or she can shed light on this.

JOB QUERY

I am writing to you to ask if you could please tell me some names and addresses of computer games testing departments or similar in the Scarborough area (or closest to). I know it is a long way from where your magazine is published but I thought you would have a better idea than I do. I leave school in spring this year after taking my exams. Are there any specific qualification that I will need for this kind of job?

Many thanks for helping me with this matter. D. Coultman, North Yorks

We know of no developers in that area, and would suggest you contact some of the larger companies such as Ocean, Acclaim, etc. There are no spe-

cific qualifications for play testing, but a decent standard of English (for filling out reports) and a basic knowledge of programming would probably be required.

PRICE WARS

In a recent issue, Wayne Stuart of Northumberland complains of the possibility of cut-price PlayStations. How selfish! I would be glad to see that others were able to afford a decent games machine. The increased sales would possibly assist in a reduction in the cost of games — economies of scale.

Regarding the question of when the PlayStation will be accompanied/replaced by a 64bit or 128bit machine. The timing will be dictated by the success/failure of the N64 when it is released and/or whether Sega offers a 64bit system. To say it will be three or four years away is naive. Companies like Apple and DELL can churn out new computer systems in a few months to take account of fluctuations or gaps in the market. I do not see that Sony is any different, indeed, Sony could well sustain both types of machine — just as computer and software companies do for the PC and Apple. If I really thought that Sony is three to four years away from producing a 64-bit machine, then I would buy an N64. I will wait and see what the next six months bring, it is not that more power means an increase in the playability of games, it is that it offers the opportunity for better, more demanding games —

just as the PlayStation and Saturn did to the Super NES, et al. Now to add to the Confessionals article on bugs and omissions, the reason why *Formula 1* is not the perfect game (a silly concept anyway) is that there will be a sequel(s) which will claim to fix the known bugs and/or shortcomings in the game, thereby earning Sony etc another £25 million in Europe alone. Games producers are not stupid, their aim is to relieve you of as much of your money as they possibly can. They will have realised that *Formula 1* is an excellent game as it is and that by leaving out some things they will be able to make even more money later on. So watch out for the sequel games and the new bugs...

So, bugs and omissions, in some cases are no more than a means of getting you to part with more money for the later upgraded version(s). If some of your readers think that they have been short-changed, then they should complain as loudly as possible and back it up by demanding their money back. If that fails, then they should boycott the products of the companies involved. The thing that really gets them doing what you want is the kick in the bank balance. We, the consumers, are the ones with the power, we just have to realise it and use it.

I have an idea, why don't some of your readers form the Games User Group (a GUG idea — sorry) to lobby the government and software/hardware houses? There is the Internet waiting for some to organise such a group and for very little expense; they could charge a small joining fee to help. It would be in the interests of all gamers to join and support such a group which, like the games market, could be worldwide.

Dr David Heath, Merseyside

THE PITS

I'm afraid that I am forced to continue the never ending *Formula 1* debate having read your article on Bugs in the

THE ON-GOING COMPLAINTS REGARDING THE SONY MACHINE'S LACK OF RELIABILITY ARE STILL RAGING.



FAQ

THE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS OF THE MONTH ARE, ONCE AGAIN, MET WITH STRAIGHT ANSWERS.

Q I am a big fan of French developers Delphine, and have bought virtually all their games across a number of machines. Since *Fade to Black*, however, they seem to have fallen from the limelight, and there's no news on anything from them. Can you shed some light on a possible Delphine new release?

A As soon as the PlayStation version of *Fade to Black* was complete, Delphine started work on another new title for EA. *Moto Racer* is a dirt bike racing game, with the player whizzing up and down some incredibly tortuous courses against either a friend or a number of CPU-controlled opponents. It is Delphine's first attempt at a racing game and is looking very promising indeed. However, as with all their titles, development is being lead with the PC version, with an enhanced PlayStation version to follow. After that, there are rumours that Conrad Hart is set to return again, but Delphine are being typically tight-lipped about what their plans are for the space adventurer.

Q I read ages ago that Ocean were planning a PlayStation game based around Arnold Schwarzenegger's film, *Eraser*. Since then, though, I have heard nothing else, and despite pestering my local retailer am none the wiser as to its release date. Can you tell me when it is coming out, and what sort of game it is?

A Ocean signed up the rights to *Eraser* over a year ago, and planned for the game to coincide with either the cinematic or video release of the film. After six months of development, Ocean received code of the game, and were rather dismayed to find it was a tepid in-screen shoot 'em up, set against scenes digitised from the film. Unwilling to release such an obviously dreadful game, Ocean promptly scrapped the title, although news of its demise never made it to the press. A brief glimpse of the game was shown by accident on Ocean's ECTS showreel last April, and from the *Eraser* code on show it is a blessing that the final game never emerged.

Q Everywhere you go there are dozens of PlayStation soccer games, loads of Tennis titles, and games for Ice Hockey, American Football, and Athletics. There's even a new Rugby game. Why then, is there a distinct lack of Cricket games for the PlayStation? It is one of the most popular sports around and its huge following would surely suggest that there is enough interest for a PlayStation Cricket game. Are there any Cricket games planned, or am I destined to dig out my old Amiga and play old Audiogenic games for the rest of my life?

A In keeping with their plans to cover every sport under their 'EA Sports' banner, Electronic Arts are currently planning a Cricket game for release in the summer. The game is being coded by Beam Software (who were responsible for 'Way of the Exploding Fist' all those years ago) and is set to be endorsed in some way so EA can continue with their 'officially endorsed' simulation line. In the meantime, Codemasters are also working on a Cricket game. Following the success of their Brian Lara games for the Megadrive, the Leamington-based developer are now planning a PlayStation version of the game, with all the playability of the original, but with more detail and motion-captured players.

Q BMG's *Exhumed* has been released for the Saturn for ages now, has the PlayStation version been scrapped, or are there still plans to release it?

A Lobotomy's code was handed to Sega as an exclusive deal, but the developers recreated the maps and rectified any gripes with the Sega code for the Sony release. See our preview (page 24) for more info.

January issue. Contrary to the statement made by Psygnosis, the infernal pit stop bug occurs in every mode I can find where the pit stops are enabled. Further more, Glen O'Connell states that the bug occurs when playing over long distances, yet I found it to be present in races as short as 6 laps, or do Psygnosis expect us all to play one lap races?

As for not spoiling one's enjoyment, I have finished a 12 lap race where four of the six cars leading just before the first pit stop decided to stop on every subsequent lap. This left myself and one other car to compete with the third placed car which was over a minute behind. This certainly spoilt my enjoyment and I would imagine it would have upset anyone with a competitive nature. It would seem to me impossible for Psygnosis to have carried out the amount of play-testing they claim and not discover this bug. They are therefore either lying or they deliberately foisted an inferior and seriously flawed product onto 600,000 people. The ideal solution would be for Psygnosis to produce a bug free version and make it available to anyone wishing to exchange their copy. I for one would be willing to pay £2 to cover the cost of manufacture of the CD, as I doubt that Psygnosis would be willing to risk incurring a £1.2m debt should everyone wish a new copy.

Could you please print the name and address of a suitable person at Psygnosis for all of us disgruntled *Formula 1* owners to write a letter of complaint. I would urge anyone complaining to include the above suggestion. Dr. D. Huxley, Kent

It's a bit harsh to say that Psygnosis deliberately shipped Formula 1 with bugs so they could rectify them for the sequel. No game is deliberately released with faults, as Sony and the relevant software house's bug-testing departments will confirm. There is the odd occasion where a game is so bugged as to be unplayable (Microprose's Gunship has a nasty bug which crashes the game every time,

apparently), but only when it completely prevents the player from progressing can it be claimed as 'short-changing' people. It is true, however, that some software houses prefer to ignore bugs when they are made apparent and this needs to be rectified, but Psygnosis we feel deserve praise for standing up to some of the criticisms levied at Formula 1. As for the pit stop bug, we'll be offering Psygnosis the chance to address Dr. Buxley's comment next month.

'DISC-HOP'

I bought my PlayStation on its September 95 launch, needless to say I was delighted with it as I also bought *WipEout*. This fun went undiluted for a couple of months until my machine started to 'disc-hop' more and more frequently on FMV



sequences. Although at first it wasn't constant it progressively got worse and worse.

Unaware that it was a common fault I carried on as it didn't totally spoil the game-play. However, on the arrival of your October issue and the letters page I learned otherwise and immediately related to Dougie Law's problem, yet it is now too late as my guarantee has now expired. Not knowing what to do I took the advice of Mr Raistrick and turned my PlayStation on it's side, this worked for a while but it started to 'hop' again. Besides, after paying £300 I shouldn't have to. And recently it transpires that Sony have admitted the problem and redesigned the PlayStation! With no guarantee, is there anyway I can get it swapped. A phone number, address, please! Mr Dolan, Cheshire

Contact Sony on 0171 911 8700, and ask for the customer support division. They may be able to help.

PSYGNOSIS' EXPLANATION OF THE F1 PROBLEMS ISN'T ENOUGH FOR A HANDFUL OF IRATE READERS.





Next Month

Micro Machines V3

AFTER MORE FALSE STARTS THAN LINFORD CHRISTIE'S OLYMPIC BID, CODEMASTERS' TABLE-TOP RACER FINALLY ROLLS IN FOR REVIEW. WITH STUNNING RENDERED SPRITES AND BACKDROPS, AND PLAYABILITY BEYOND ANY OTHER PLAYSTATION GAME TO DATE, MICRO MACHINES V3 IS MOST CERTAINLY A CONTENDER FOR 'GAME OF THE YEAR.' AND IN THE FIRST REVIEW OF THE GAME, WE TAKE IT TO PIECES FOR THE COMPLETE PICTURE.



ISS Pro

KONAMI'S SOCCER GAME SEEMS TO HAVE IT ALL. REALISTIC ANIMATION, ALL THE MOVES YOU'D SEE IN A REAL GAME, AND GOAL KEEPER WITH DOUBLE THE INTELLIGENCE OF THEIR NEAREST BINARY RIVALS. FROM THE TEAM THAT BROUGHT US THE DISAPPOINTING GOALSTORM COMES A GAME AIMING FOR THE TOP OF THE PLAYSTATION PREMIERSHIP. PLAYSTATION PLUS RUNS ON THE FIELD, AND PITS ISS PRO AGAINST THE REST OF THE PACK.



Exhumed

BMG'S 'DOOM IN EGYPT' IS RELEASED FOR THE PLAYSTATION NEXT MONTH, AND A REVIEW COPY OF THE GAME IS PROMISED FOR THE NEXT ISSUE.

DEVELOPERS LOBOTOMY, HAVE GONE BACK TO THE SATURN CODE AND RECTIFIED ANY COMPLAINTS THEY RECEIVED. AS SUCH, THE PLAYSTATION VERSION OF THE GAME IS FAR CLOSER TO LOBOTOMY'S ORIGINAL PLANS FOR THE TITLE. BUT CAN IT SEE OFF GT'S MIGHTY DOOM?



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